THISTLE INN

KATHARINE ADAMS

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By

KATHARINE ADAMS

Illustrated by George M. Richards

High up among the rocks, through turning roads and twisted river beds, against the cold gray slabs, stands Thistle Inn. Few know of its existence; among those who do are the ardent followers of Charles Stuart, who are plotting for his succession to the throne of Scotland.

Elspeth, a quiet, observant girl of sixteen, together with her cousin, Glenfinnan, a year her senior, become "marked for service" and undertake to aid Bonnie Prince Charlie. Glenfinnan serves in the army. Elspeth, alone, a little afraid, but full of enthusiasm for her prince, carries messages and is useful to those who are fighting and working toward the salvation of Scotland.

It is a year since Katharine Adams presented a girls' book to her audience. So forceful is *Thistle Inn,* so rich in background and so thrilling is the story of the particular devotion of a few young boys and girls, that Miss Adams is justified in having made us wait so long for the new book.

Katharine Adams, author of many popular books for girls, was born in Elmira, New York. She received her education in New York and in France. At present she is a resident of Dublin, but she has traveled extensively and knows thoroughly the countries which form the backgrounds of her books.

Miss Adams has a rare quality of understanding girls. Her books are full of the love of adventure, of romance, of spirit and of character that girls love and appreciate. Her books are in constant demand at the libraries and her latest, *Thistle Inn,* will quickly find a place for itself on lists and on girls' shelves.

THISTLE INN

BOOKS BY

KATHARINE ADAMS

MIDSUMMER

MIDWINTER

WISP: A GIRL OF DUBLIN

RED CAPS AND LILIES

MEHITABLE

THE SILVER TARN

TOTO AND THE GIFT

THISTLE INN

THE TWO BOYS MADE A CHAIR FOR HER WITH THEIR ARMS AND BORE HER INTO THE INN.

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BY
KATHARINE ADAMS

Illustrated by
GEORGE RICHARDS

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TO

KATHLEEN MAUREEN
PATRICK DERMOTT
AND BRIAN

7559

THISTLE INN

CHAPTER I

"ELSPETH!"

The girl's voice echoed through the dark, rain-soaked garden, and she seemed to hear *Elspeth* repeated from the dim corner where stood a row of statues green with mildew.

She stood still, listening, and shivering a little in the pale twilight. She shook a mass of fair curls back from her forehead, and called again sharply: "Elspeth—where are you? Don't tease me. I saw you!"

Then an answer came, in a voice that laughed

itself across the damp fragrance of the old garden. "I am up in the hawthorn tree, at the very top!"

The girl with the fair curls ran swiftly across the greensward, holding her red cloak, which the wind was trying to sweep away from her, closely about her shoulders. As she drew near a gaunt old hawthorn tree close to an ivy-covered wall, she called: "I knew you were somewhere in the garden. You always are. Come down. I've news for you. Come quickly!"

There was a sound of twigs breaking and of someone half-sliding, half-crawling down rough bark. A moment later, the dark-clad figure of a girl zigzagged its way down the body of the tree and, catching a lower branch, swung lightly to the ground.

"I've been here a half-hour," the girl called Elspeth said breathlessly as she steadied herself for a moment, one hand on her cousin's shoulder. She was short and rather thickset. Her brown hair fell in a straight, soft mane across her shoulders. The square face was softened by thick, curling, brown eyelashes, and her gray eyes smiled from under straight brows.

"You were there for half an hour, but you saw nothing. You are always expecting something won-

derful to happen, but it never does. Do come into the house. We may have tea in the kitchen with Cudsy. Mother and the aunts are having supper with Lady McAllister, so no one will know except the upstairs maids—who do not care, and the scullery maids—who will only giggle! There is nothing nicer than tea in the kitchen with Cudsy." As she spoke, the girl in the red cloak took the other's arm and they walked slowly across the garden.

"Very well, Charmaine, but what is this bit of news you had for me? It appears that it is nothing at all. Tell me!" Elspeth stood still, holding her cousin back and looking up at her earnestly.

Charmaine laughed, her blue eyes dancing. She squeezed Elspeth's arm and then loosened her hold of it and ran on ahead. Elspeth overtook her and held her firmly, shaking her a little. "You shall not tease me. Is it true that you have heard some news?" she demanded, with a catch in her voice.

"What news is it that you wish so much to hear?" her cousin bantered.

"You know well the only thing that would mean news to me—word of the Prince," answered Elspeth.

"Bumble caught a mouse—that is all I knew. Ah! but I will not tease you. There is real news."

"News of the Prince? Speak quickly." Her eyes flashed as she turned and faced her cousin. A soft August wind blew about them, flapping the cape of Charmaine's red cloak. Overhead some rooks flew to their nesting-place at the top of a tall tree at the far end of the garden, their harsh cries nearly drowning Charmaine's next words.

"The Prince has landed at the end of Loch Shiel. They have raised a standard—red with a white center. The Highlanders are gathering everywhere, and rallying around him. News has come to Holyrood, and there are notices on the walls. The Macdonalds and the Donald Camerons and many, many Highlanders are his friends."

Elspeth stood very still for a moment, her hands clasped tightly, her eyes looking straight before her. Charmaine knew that her words had meant a great deal to her cousin and she gazed at her curiously. She had known her for over seven years, ever since Elspeth had first come to live with her aunts and cousins, and she had never before seen tears in her eyes.

"Why do you care so much, Ellie? You have never seen this Prince. He is nothing to you. Why do you so care?" There was something wistful in Charmaine's perplexity. She and Elspeth had played with dolls and at hide-and-seek in the old days. They had climbed trees and had sat side by side at the dancing school, which they both disliked. They had been close companions for seven years, but at fifteen Charmaine did not understand her cousin any better than she had done when they were seven.

They had been walking slowly toward a tall, cold-looking house at the end of the garden, and as they neared the arched doorway Elspeth paused and answered, thoughtfully and gently:

"I would rather have Prince Charlie king of Scotland than anything else in all the world. I would rather live a drab, stupid life and grow old and gray with no wonderful happenings in my own life, than have him fail. I cannot explain it to you, Charmaine. It is something deep in my heart, in my blood. Our ancestors were Highlanders. Our most esteemed and beloved grandmother remembered the glens, and beyond anyone else she honored her father, who was a great chief. You know all this,

but you do not understand. It is only Glenfinnan who understands!"

"Oh—Glen." Charmaine dismissed her brother's name with a little shrug of her shoulders. "Glen is so solemn and old for his years," she said. They went on down a long, dark corridor toward a half-opened door beyond which they could see the dancing light from a fire. At the end of the large room that they entered a huge fire was burning in a wide built-in oven. Pewter and copper pans shone like silver and gold, all along one side of the great room. There were pots of geraniums on the sills of the leaded windows, and a plump yellow cat was curled up near the plants. His paws were so wide that he looked like a huge sunflower. Elspeth dropped on her knees beside him, murmuring, "Darling goldy-pet, soft paws, beautiful one!"—then, taking him up in her arms, sat down on one end of a long, trestle-like table in the middle of the room.

Charmaine danced idly about the room, humming to herself and waving the capes of her red cloak about her yellow head. She spoke twice to Elspeth without receiving an answer. Her cousin was thinking deeply, both arms around Bumble, the cat. The

Prince had landed at Loch Shiel! Who knows but what—but it is too wonderful!—who knows but that he may win his way through to us, to Edinburgh! Elspeth thought rapidly, excitedly. She looked across at Charmaine. "Do you not think, Charmaine, that the Prince may win through? He may reach this very town. I cannot sit still and think about it. I must *do* something."

Elspeth jumped off the table, tumbling the cat to the floor, and catching her cousin by the waist, whirled her across the floor.

"That will do. Art tha daft that tha can treat my decent kitchen so!" came an admonishing voice from the doorway. A fat, short woman waddled into the room, two yellow bowls, one inside the other, in her hands.

"Cudsy dear, we have come to have tea with you. Hot tea and hot bannocks," Elspeth cried over her shoulder as they danced across the room.

"I have raisins and shall make tha girdle cakes, real Yorkshire ones," said Cudsy, well pleased at the visit from the two girls, but not wishing to show her pleasure too much.

"Not girdle cakes today, you funny Yorkshire

woman. I want bannocks, Scotch bannocks—Scotch, I tell you," Elspeth stopped dancing and, running up to the cook, threw both arms around her. "Have you not heard the great news, Cudsy? It is something sweet and thrilling. The Prince has landed at Loch Shiel. He has landed and his standard is unfurled." Elspeth's voice choked on the last words.

Cudsy shrugged her fat shoulders as she made slow progress toward the cupboard near the oven; and a few minutes later, when she was busy with flour and butter and baking pans at the table, she muttered to herself, "Stuff and nonsense, all this Prince talk!"

Charmaine leaned her elbows on the table, idly sampling raisins from a blue bowl. "It is only when Elspeth is here that you allow Bumble to sit on the kitchen table, and he knows it well," she was saying to Cudsy.

Elspeth broke in on her words. "Why do you not say something about the news I have told you, Cudsy?" she asked, leaning forward with one hand on the white deal table, her long, brown hair falling across her shoulders.

"Talk for children!" Cudsy snorted. "I'll na believe them. Th'art daft with tha Prince and tha dreaming!" She sifted flour vigorously, ignoring Elspeth's indignant glance.

"It is true, every word that Elspeth says, Cudsy; there are notices in all the squares, and it will be in tomorrow's papers. Father's friend, old Mr. Twigg, told us," Charmaine remarked as she stroked Bumble's wide yellow head.

"Then there will be no holding of Mistress Elspeth. She will be atop the hawthorn tree watching every hour the blessed day and night, and na good will come of it. Charlie's but a daft lad and——"

"He is a lad of iron and gold; iron for his will and gold for his hair!" exclaimed Elspeth, following Cudsy to the oven. Cudsy shoved her pans of dough gently inside the oven and then turning, raised both hands and said, "Cotton!" and just what she meant by it neither of the girls knew. Elspeth regarded her from under frowning brows, but she was not in the least disturbed.

"Th'art not easy to deal with, young Mistress Elspeth. Th'aunts find it so, and they are right. Th'art always on fire about one thing or another,

instead o' minding tha lessons as a nice young gentlewoman should do. Now it is the Prince who is roaming the country, taking with him honest Highland crofters who should be at home, upsetting everyone —tha most of all, Mistress Elspeth. 'Tis the Prince this and the Prince that."

"It was always the Prince," Elspeth said, slowly.

"Now, Cudsy, do not be a cross old grumbler! We have come to have a jolly tea with you. It is a treat for us," begged Charmaine, patting Cudsy's shoulder.

The cook smiled, her fat face curling into round circles. "Tha bannocks will be ready in a breath and I'm putting on the best cloth. Aye, I'm well pleased that tha have come for a cup o' tea and maybe I've some news of import to tell tha. There's news *and* news, and mine is fair the best!" Cudsy leaned over the oven and drew out a tin of golden bannocks.

"They can cool a bit whilst I draw the tea," she commented, a smile still curving her lips. She knew that the girls were watching her and was prepared for the eager questions which assailed her as she crossed over to a row of shelves for the tea caddy.

"What do you mean, Cudsy? What is your news?

We are perishing to know, so tell us at once!" demanded Charmaine. Elspeth sat on the edge of the table, her eyes on the cook, but she did not speak.

Cudsy paused dramatically. "'Tis news that should please Mistress Elspeth. There was a time when it would have meant much to her. 'Tis this: A letter has come to your lady aunt to say that Master Glenfinnan will arrive by horse tonight, and will spend the morrow with you all," she said.

Elspeth jumped off the table, crying, "Glen, Glen! Oh, this *is* news! It means very much to me, Cudsy —more than you know. I want beyond all things to see and talk with Glen!"

She drank the delicious hot tea which Cudsy poured for them, and ate a bannock dreamily. She loved the old kitchen. She had dreamed many dreams there, and as she watched the dancing blue and gold flames of the cheery fire, she wondered whether she would dream many more there. Always through her dreams there was the one picture of a Prince with golden hair, a Prince who, alone at first, unaided, had dreamed himself, and now was striving to make his dream come true. It was of Charles Stuart she thought always, the last of his

race; of him who had come from his birthplace in Italy, back to the home of his forefathers.

Elspeth, sitting in the warmth of the kitchen in her uncle's house, made a sudden little prayer that his daring adventure might not be in vain!

CHAPTER II

ELSPETH was watching for her cousin Glenfinnan from the top of the hawthorn tree. Now and then she turned an anxious eye toward the tall gray portals at the front of the garden where at any moment a sedan chair might draw up. It would be bringing her aunts Joan and Milly back from their tea-drinking. It would not do for them to find her at the top of the tree. It was her joy that they had never discovered her favorite retreat. It was only one of many things about her that they never had discovered.

She gazed down on the dark, strange town whose steep, somber sides were alight here and there with flaming torches, making sharp points of color through the grayness. Elspeth's uncle's house perched high on the top of one of the cavern-like sides of the city. Below its garden, as far as one could see, were streets lined with shops, and below them were the yards and kennels, damp and dark,

and strewn with rubbish. As far down as one could see were ill-lit lanes, dark roadways where tumble-down houses and rickety shops seemed to nod at each other grotesquely; while the stately houses far above seemed to cling to the backbone of Castle Hill.

Elspeth loved it all. It was her city. She loved it best at twilight when the few pale lights from candles far below gleamed faintly and the gorgeous crimson flaring of the street torches gave a touch of the fantastic to everything; and just as at noon time, when the light was brightest, she would dream of an army with Prince Charlie at its head, marching toward the city, so at twilight she visualized the flare of camp-fires and almost heard the tread of sentry's feet.

She was not dreaming at all this evening as she strained her eyes for the first glimpse of her cousin's horse. He would ride across the moor to Glasgow and then on to Edinburgh. He was her favorite in all the world, except the Prince. He was coming from school for only one day's holiday. Something touched her suddenly, something of the second sight perhaps, peculiar to her race. She knew that there

was a reason for Glenfinnan's coming and that in some way it would affect her life.

Elspeth was so engrossed by the news of the Prince and the news of her cousin's coming that she didn't actually see him until he was well up over the hill. She scrambled down the tree, ran across the garden, pulled open an old door in the brick wall, and ran outside eagerly. Glenfinnan's groom had just opened the portals and Glenfinnan was dismounting, patting his horse and talking to him. "That was a good run, Roderick. There is not another horse like you in all Scotland, not one. I'll swear that the Prince has no better!"

"Glen!" Elspeth's voice rang out gladly in the evening air. Glenfinnan turned toward her, but before he could greet her an Aberdeen terrier rushed upon him. "Thady Boy, it is a real welcome you give me," he said, stooping to pat the eager animal. "You, cousin, how is it with you?" he asked as the two went through the door in the brick wall. Glenfinnan looked back as he went on. The groom was leading the horses around the house toward the stables.

Elspeth caught her cousin's arm, speaking so

eagerly that her words sounded disjointed and confused. "Glen, it is so good that you have come this night of all nights, when there is such news, such news of the Prince. He has landed at Loch Shiel. Glen, Glen, there is a rumor that he will come all the way—that he will try to reach here—Edinburgh. Prince Charlie will—who knows—reach Edinburgh!"

Glenfinnan's dark face showed no change of expression as his cousin was speaking, but lightened with a smile as Thady Boy sprang sideways in front of him, bumping against him in ecstasy.

Elspeth gave an exclamation of impatience. "Does nothing ever surprise you, Glen? I know you do care about the Prince, and yet you seem scarcely to hear me when I tell you. You, too, are thinking of the Prince, but——"

Glenfinnan interrupted her, speaking softly, "Your voice carries so. What Aunt Milly says of it is true: it is shrill—it echoes. It is not well to speak loudly of all one feels these days." They were walking across the garden toward the house. There was a sound of carriage wheels outside. Elspeth quickened her steps.

"The aunts are returning from their visit. It will never do for them to know that I am outside in the garden at this hour. You are strange, Glen. You say nothing, yet you know about Loch Shiel. You knew before I told you!"

Elspeth's cheeks were crimson. The blue and white kerchief at her throat was twisted to one side and she was unaware that the damp tree had left a green stain on one of her white wool stockings. She gazed up at her cousin, who returned her glance gravely. "Yes, I knew," he said. He hesitated, or rather, it was as though he were thinking deeply; he was slow in his ways and in his speech. Elspeth listened with all her soul as he went on.

"I had something to tell you, but it cannot be told tonight. I must make my respects to my mother and Aunt Milly. There will be supper soon. I want you to be ready to walk with me tomorrow at five. What I have to tell you can wait until then." Glen started to walk on toward the house as he finished speaking, but Elspeth caught his arms.

"I cannot wait, Glen. You must tell me now," she breathed. She had forgotten for the moment everyone and everything—Charmaine, Cudsy, the fact

that at any moment the aunts would send for her to come into the house. She knew only that Glenfinnan was there with news for her alone, and she wanted with all her heart to know all he knew; to share his secrets.

"I'll not tell you until tomorrow," Glenfinnan said firmly, and she knew by experience that there would be no use in urging him. They went on through the corridor past the kitchen.

"We had tea and bannocks with Cudsy this afternoon. Will you not say a word to her! It was she who told us you were coming," Elspeth whispered.

Glenfinnan took her arm and hurried her along the hall. "I want naught of Cudsy and her bannocks. She's but a fat prattling Yorkshire woman, and you will do well to keep your thoughts and your speech away from her," he said.

Elspeth pushed back a green door at one end of the corridor and spoke laughingly over her shoulder. "You are like a cross schoolmaster, Glen. Go to the drawing-room. When I am ready I will join you there."

She ran quickly up the winding back stairs to the chill stately room in the back wing of the old house,

which she shared with her cousin Charmaine. She washed and dressed herself with quick, nervous hands, frowning as she combed out her thick, fine hair. There was a small tear in the stiff, gray-blue taffeta frock which she put on clumsily over her head, but she pinned it together, then fastened a soft cream lace at her throat with a brooch in the shape of a golden rose. It had belonged to her mother who had died when she was a baby. She usually wore it with her silk frock when she went to the drawing-room in the evenings to sit with her aunts.

As soon as she was ready she ran downstairs two steps at a time, a perilous habit of hers. Her heart was beating high with excitement. Her cheeks were crimson. She stood for a moment outside the cold-looking drawing-room door, trying to compose herself. She knew that she was late. They would all be in the drawing-room, the aunts, Charmaine, and Glenfinnan. She knocked softly on the door and went in.

She stood for a moment facing the room after she had shut the door behind her. Several people were talking together, and the staid matter-of-factness of the long, dimly lit apartment and the quiet

voices of its occupants struck her afresh. It and they were so alien to her in what they thought and felt—all save Glenfinnan. They were alien to her although they were her own flesh and blood. They were immeasurably far from all that she most cared for. Her vivid emotions, her quickly changing thoughts, her dreams and fancies could never be understood by any of them.

Aunt Hester, tall, fair, a little cold but always just, sat close to the fire working at some fine embroidery, her silver-gray draperies falling softly about her, a diamond brooch sparkling in the laces at her throat. Aunt Milly, short, dark, voluble, was standing by the fire, her teacup resting on the mantelpiece, where a gilt clock ticked severely. Charmaine in white, also sewing, sat on a stool at her mother's feet. Dear Charmaine—Elspeth's heart went out to her always with love, yet Charmaine, too, seemed far away from so much that she thought and felt.

Elspeth stood for a moment with her back to the door, facing the room. Then she leaned over, and caught up Thady Boy, who had run across to her, barking a welcome. Aunt Milly was talking in her

fussy, disconnected way. Her hat was a little on one side, as it always seemed to be. Her buff-colored dress looked too tight for her. Her dark eyes glared severely at Elspeth, but she only nodded at her as she went on speaking. "Evan would have been pleased, indeed, had he sensed the conservative element at the tea. The whole sentiment was strongly Whig and of course no one really believes that Charles Stuart is at Loch Shiel."

Elspeth still stood with her back against the door, her face ablaze with color. She had often been angry with Aunt Milly before, but never so much as at that moment. A torrent of words rushed to her lips, but her eyes caught Glenfinnan's and his seemed to command her silence. Her anger the next instant was mixed with excitement. He knew more than any of the others there in that quiet, fire-lit drawing-room. He knew, and his silence meant more than all Aunt Milly's chattering. She came slowly across the room, still holding Thady Boy, and when she came up to her Aunt Joan's chair she made her a little curtsy.

A manservant, carrying a tray, had come in through a door at the far end of the room. He

stood with the tray before Aunt Joan, who put down her sewing and took up a glass filled with wine and hot water. She sipped it slowly as she regarded her niece. Fergus, the servant, passed the tray to the others and then left the room.

"You are late, Elspeth. You know well that I desire you and Charmaine to be present here in the drawing-room to receive us, in the evening, when we are not entertaining, provided that the hour is not too late." Aunt Joan's pale blue eyes looked up at Elspeth as she spoke. Then she sipped her wine and water, a look of perplexity deepening on her pale face. "What is it that you do? Where is it that you go, Elspeth? So often I do not find you in the schoolroom at tea-time. There is always a search for you when you are wanted suddenly, and generally you are found somewhere in the garden or upstairs in the attics. What odd ways you have for a girl who in two years' time will be almost ready for her first ball!"

Aunt Joan spoke softly, as always, but as always her words disconcerted Elspeth. Before she could think of a reply, Glenfinnan spoke. "Please, Mother, let us have a pleasant hour together. I must ride

back tomorrow night. I have so been looking forward to this little time with you all. Come, let Charmaine sing for us, and then later when Father comes in we will have supper and the girls shall share it with us."

Aunt Joan smiled an assent as she always did at anything Glenfinnan wanted.

"Let the girls have a whole holiday tomorrow. Let them stay out in the garden as much as they like. It is a quiet enough place for them at best," Glenfinnan went on, but Aunt Milly's voice interrupted him.

"Nonsense, Glen, they have too much liberty, far more than I had at their age. They had friends for tea twice last week, and they are forever being driven across the city for supper or an outing of some kind with their adored friends the Boomers."

Charmaine frowned up at her aunt from the cushion at her mother's feet. "Aunt Milly, the tea-drinkings are so stupid. We have such silly times." Having delivered this remark she bent her head again over her sewing, her fair hair falling in a shower across her shoulders. Elspeth glanced at her with approval. She loved Charmaine dearly

and would have fought her battles before all the world.

"The Boomers are of course our dearest friends. They are *not* silly, but very interesting, Charmaine. Hood Boomer is—what was that word you used today, Glen?—Hood is individual."

Elspeth smiled across at Glenfinnan as she spoke.

"Hood Boomer is an ungracious, spoiled, impossible little baggage and should be well smacked!" said Aunt Milly severely, putting her glass on the mantel. She crossed over to a chair opposite her sister and sat down. "Just put the fire screen between me and the fire, will you, Glen," she went on.

Elspeth said nothing, but she was thinking angrily. "Hood Boomer has far more intelligence than you could ever have, Aunt Milly. This room is like the Channings. It has no imagination. It has no life or action or gold or scarlet. It is a Whig room. It wants the same old stupid ways. It wants a king over us who lives in England instead of a golden Prince, a golden King of Scotland." She saw that Glenfinnan was watching her, and she smiled. He knew what she was thinking of, and although his thoughts were not so fantastic as hers, they also

were always of Prince Charlie. They shared a dream together, she and her cousin, and as their eyes met there by the waning fire, something like a promise seemed to draw them closely together. They were meant for high adventure, and suddenly the realization of it touched them both.

CHAPTER III

On the day after Glenfinnan's arrival, Cudsy made a treacle pudding for lunch. She put it on a wide red and gold platter and handed it carefully to the maidservant whose red face, framed by a wide fluted cap, gleamed above it. "Mind thaself, Polly. 'Tis noddin' at the top and I made it as a favor for Mistress Elspeth, as it's Master Glen's best puddin'. An odd lad he is, to be sure, close-mouthed as was his grandfather, but with his grandmother's eyes.

Aye, a fine gay old lady was she, all fire and fun, and not like her daughter, not at all. Go steady. Don't stand there staring."

Polly departed with the pudding steaming and gleaming in its golden juice, and Cudsy waddled across the great kitchen, moving pots and pans about with practiced hands, and speaking sharply to a group of giggling kitchen-maids at the far end of the room. "Go on with the potatoes and carrots and stop that chatter," she admonished them. There were pheasants to roast and a ham to boil for the night's dinner. The Channings were proud of their fine repasts, and Cudsy was proud of them, too. There were few nights when brisk, talkative Evan Channing did not invite some of his lawyer friends to dine. There were always long discussions afterwards in the drawing-room.

"You will do well to listen carefully tonight, Glen, to all that James Abercrombie says about this nonsense of Charles Stuart. James is a fine plain man, no vapors about him," Evan Channing was saying to his son as he served the treacle pudding.

Elspeth glanced quickly at Glenfinnan, who was enjoying his pudding. Uncle Evan saw the glance

and smiled kindly at her and she smiled back at him. She was very fond of Uncle Evan. His kindness had always been there since she had come to live in his house, a quiet, shy child of nine. He was a quick-speaking, good-natured little man, well set up in his dark satin coat, flowered waistcoat, and breeches.

Elspeth saw the color touch Glenfinnan's cheek, but he made no reply to his father. How familiar it all was—the neat, spacious dining-room, all of them sitting about the lunch table eating treacle pudding as they always did when Glenfinnan came on a holiday. Aunt Milly had started on an account of a shopping expedition she had had the day before. Suddenly she stopped abruptly and spoke directly to her niece.

"Elspeth, what are you doing, staring at nothing at all? What an odd girl you are!"

Uncle Evan turned a smiling glance on her. He was not accustomed to paying very much attention to Aunt Milly's chatter and he was fond of his niece. "Elspeth is like her grandmother, your own mother, my dear Milly. She would often sit thinking, her eyes on nothing at all. Well, well, I've a conference with two men lately arrived by coach from London.

They say that there is little or no concern there over this Charles Stuart affair, and I've assured them that business here and in Perth is keeping an even tone and that we of ordinary common sense are going our way without fear of the lad's really being able to reach Edinburgh, or to make any great disturbance through the country."

Evan Channing rose as he spoke, and his son rose with him and stood facing him. When Glenfinnan answered, Elspeth thought that his voice sounded oddly low and steady in comparison with the voices of the others. "When Prince Charlie is your king, Father, you will do him honor," he said. There was a moment's silence in the room after he had spoken, and then Aunt Milly exclaimed, "The boy is daft!" but no one minded her. Uncle Evan patted his son's shoulder and said, "True enough in story books, my son."

But Elspeth thought, "He might have said so much, yet he said only that one thing. He is only seventeen, but he is deep. He knows so much that Uncle Evan does not know!" Her thoughts were interrupted by the sudden opening of the door. A breathless voice greeted them. They all turned to-

ward a short, sharp-nosed old man who made two quick bows to the aunts and said, "Pardon, madam, pardon, Miss Channing, for this intrusion and my not being announced, but I have come on a matter of great import." He turned to Uncle Evan as he went. "Evan, Evan, it is true! The Prince is at Loch Shiel. A rider has come through. It is not a rumor. Eight hundred Camerons met him there. James the Eighth's manifestoes were read and Charles was pronounced Prince. The Keppoch Macdonalds are there. Charles has twelve hundred men, so the rider declares. They are pasting up notices in the squares and along the walls. Evan, the lad must be betwitched. Three hundred Appin Stuarts have reinforced his army and they are marching east to Invergarry."

Old Mr. Twigg sat down on the chair offered him and accepted a glass of wine from Aunt Joan. He was trembling, and some of his excitement extended to the aunts, to Evan Channing and Charmaine, to say nothing of Elspeth. Glenfinnan stood calmly at his father's side. There was no emotion visible on his face. He turned to his mother. "I will look about the town for a bit, Mother. Do not forget

that you have promised Elspeth she may walk with me at five." He looked at Mr. Twigg. "Do not be alarmed, sir. It is glorious news that you have brought." He went on out of the room, leaving the others to talk over Mr. Twigg's report.

A little later, Elspeth and Charmaine went arm in arm up the broad stairway to the schoolroom. It was their own room, and except for the maids who came to dust it no one of the family except Glenfinnan ever visited it. Elspeth always felt a sense of freedom when she closed its door upon the rest of the house. She loved the room. It was more to her than just a room: it was a vivid part of her life.

There was length and space to this room. The fireplace at the far end was banked with ferns from the garden. There was never a fire in the schoolroom in summer. Elspeth did not mind, but Charmaine often grumbled about the chill of the room. There were buff-colored curtains at the tall windows. The broad table near the windows was covered with a faded cloth worked with red and green flowers in worsted on a dark background. Bumble sat on the broad window-sill idly watching a bee.

There were two oak presses, one on each side of the fireplace. They belonged to the two girls, having been the property of their grandmother. The girls kept their own particular treasures in these chests.

Charmaine ran across to the farther one, and, opening the wide doors lifted down from a top shelf something that looked like a square wooden box. Elspeth came up to help her, and the two girls carried the box between them and placed it on one end of the table.

"Why do you trouble about the dolls' house today, Charmaine?" objected Elspeth, her cheeks aflame, her hands trembling a little.

"I want you to help me, Ellie. You know well that I want the house finished for the Boomer twins by the last of next week when we go to celebrate Hood's birthday. Will you not make a wee white wig for the doll manservant, Ellie? And I am sure you can give a look of elegance to the drawing-room. It is the touch you give that makes all the difference." Charmaine smiled at her cousin, and Elspeth smiled in return; but there was a touch of pity, of patronage, in her smile. It seemed incredible to her that Charmaine had no thought except

for the dolls' house she was making for the young twin sisters of their friend Hood Boomer. "The cabinet should be gilt. Where did we put the pot of gilt?" Elspeth bent over the dolls' house, and for the next half-hour she seemed almost as absorbed as her cousin in finishing the drawing-room. But all the time wild thoughts chased themselves through her mind, and ever and ever, like a song, the words repeated themselves, "Prince Charlie is coming! Prince Charlie is coming!"

"I have always loved little dolls. We never had such a good wee house as this. You have done well, Charmaine. The Boomer twins will cherish this. The paper spinet is a wee bit crooked, but I can straighten it, and I will gild it." Elspeth murmured as she dipped a brush into a pot of gilt which Charmaine had brought from the cupboard.

"We might give the piper doll to the Boomer twins. We've given up any thought of dolls long ago, and Tabs and Betsy would so prize him," suggested Charmaine as she pasted a square piece of green brocade as a curtain at one of the dolls' house windows.

Elspeth shook her head vigorously, taking the

paint brush from between her lips. "I would not give away the piper doll for all the whole wide world. He is a part of all that I think and dream about of the wonderful years long ago." Elspeth flourished the paint brush so emphatically that a bright spot of gilt fell on the fluted ruffle about Charmaine's throat, and both girls laughed.

"You are daft in the way you think and talk of the very old days, Ellie. You are an odd girl. You think far more of our grandmother's life, when she was young in the Highlands, than you do of today," said Charmaine. Elspeth answered her quickly, leaning with one hand on the table, her eyes on the leafy branches of the hawthorn tree visible through the windows.

"I think of them because they were *real*. Why, Charmaine, that was life—air, and silent, secret lochs, and flashes of plaid through the brush, and all of them as one great heart beating, and Great-grandfather chief of his clan, head of them all—" Elspeth stopped, with a catch in her voice.

Charmaine's gentle tones held a touch of disdain when she spoke. "Grandmother's life as a girl was a very strange one. It was not at all the life for a

young gentlewoman—Mother has often told me so. Grandmother lived amongst such wild people there in the Highlands. It is well indeed that she was brought away to Edinburgh when Great-grandfather died. She lived then as a lady should live in a fine city."

Elspeth bit her lip angrily. She was always angry when Charmaine spoke in that way, which fortunately was seldom. Elspeth had adored her grandmother, who had left them only a few years before. Since her death things had never seemed the same to Elspeth, especially after Glenfinnan went away to school. She did not speak for a moment, and then some words of Glenfinnan's came to her. "You must have self-control if you would help the Prince." Help the Prince! What did anything else matter? Her words were quiet when she spoke at last. "Grandmother's Edinburgh cousins should never have taken her away from the Glen. She told me that she had deserted her people and that she would never forgive herself. I think it was because she was so young that they were able to make her come away, those Edinburgh relatives. She had lived always in the Glen. All the world there did her

honor. She mourned always for the Glen. There was a time when you loved to hear Grandmother's stories. It was only two years ago that Glen and I told you one here by the fire on Allhallows' Eve." Elspeth looked up wistfully at her cousin.

Charmaine answered impatiently. "Yes, yes, but I am not so much interested now that I am older. There will soon be so much that is more interesting for us—dancing and ball frocks, and perhaps many lovers. It will be but a few years before we shall have our hair dressed high and wear beautiful trains and go out to supper parties and balls. It will be glorious. Who knows but we may be great belles? Perhaps we shall be toasted by some English general at a banquet." Charmaine smiled mischievously as she said the last, and she gave her cousin a little hug. Elspeth returned it, laughing a little.

"You are sure to be a belle, but I do not care for all that, myself. Do you know, Charmaine, I think you are pretty enough to be toasted by Prince Charlie himself——"

Elspeth was interrupted by a knock and the opening of the door. Glenfinnan stood on the threshold. He was booted and spurred, and his dark cape fell

across his shoulders. His face looked dark and grave above the lace jabot at his throat.

"Glen, you have come! We shall have a jolly tea! I'll run to Cudsy and beg for hot cakes," cried Charmaine, gathering together the scraps of furniture and paints in one sweep.

"There is no time for tea," Glen answered looking at Elspeth. "Are you ready, Ellie? We are going for a walk."

"Let me come, Glen. How stupid of you to take Ellie away!" Charmaine said crossly to her brother.

He smiled as he answered, "We will both be back for a jolly tea later on. You do not care for walking on the streets, and you would not care to go where we are going. Come, Ellie, it is late."

Elspeth ran out of the room to find her cloak, and Glenfinnan followed her.

CHAPTER IV

It was early twilight when Elspeth and Glenfinnan went out through the garden door. A thin mist lay over the city below them, and a few sharp points of light pricked the grayness.

"It is late. Some stupid people came in, and Mother wanted me to talk with them. She is busy with them now. I am sure that otherwise she would not have allowed you to come out in the dusk." Glenfinnan took Elspeth's arm to steady her as they began to descend the steep, winding, rocky path which led at last to a twisted roadway, and then still further down to a drab, shop-lined street.

When they reached the street, Glenfinnan stopped, standing with Elspeth for a moment at the top of a long flight of rickety, dirty, wooden steps. He turned and faced his cousin, suddenly taking her face in his hands. The action was so unusual that it startled her. He looked deep into her eyes and then spoke slowly. "Ellie, you've begged me always to tell you all I know about the work that is being done

for the Prince. You have said you would rather help his cause than do anything else in the world. I believe you."

Elspeth's heart was beating wildly. Glen looked into her eyes a moment longer and then dropped his hands to his sides. "You may be needed to help with the cause for Prince Charlie. Will you be ready?" The question came sharply, softly, through the dusky twilight. Glenfinnan's voice was always low and the words came clearly, abruptly. There was a strained look about his eyes. He seemed a dozen years older than the Glen she had always known.

He went on speaking before she could answer. "I trust you enough. It was when we were at lunch and Aunt Milly asked you of what you were thinking. It was then that I really knew there was nothing you would not brave or do for Prince Charlie. I saw it in your eyes. I have seen it before in the eyes of those of his truest followers. There was the spirit of the Highlands in your look. I said to myself, there are only the two of us, she and I. We are alone in the family. We stand together. We are of Loch Shiel!"

Glenfinnan stopped speaking as abruptly as he

had begun. His lips trembled a little. There was for the moment something wild and yet controlled about him. It was as though the real Glenfinnan had suddenly come through his usually quiet outward self. Elspeth put out her hand and touched his arm a little timidly. "You are right, Glen. There is nothing I would not do for the Prince. You are right, too, in saying we are alone. Darling Charmaine is so far from us in all this; so are the aunts and Uncle Evan. But for me"—her voice took on its old note of impatience—"what could there be for me to do? I am just a girl in my uncle's house. I am only sixteen. Tell me, Glen, what *could* I do?" She caught hold of the white fluted jabot of his waistcoat with both hands. The wind circled around them, bringing dirt and unsavory odors from the dank alley-way below.

Glenfinnan did not reply. He began to descend the very steep flight of wooden steps, putting a hand back to steady his cousin. When they reached the last step they both looked up at the street they had left. It towered above them and seemed a long way off.

"The first lesson you must learn," said Glenfinnan,

"is not to ask questions. You will be told what to do and where to do it. It is possible that you will never be needed. You must learn patience. You must wait. You are now going to meet some people whom you will see again. You may speak of them to me when we are alone, but you are never to speak of having been here or of having seen them, to anyone else in the world." As he finished speaking, Glenfinnan rapped sharply at a door at the end of the narrow dark road, and it was opened for them almost at once by a girl who stood aside so that they might pass in. She did not speak until she had shut the door, and then she only said, "Good nicht, Maister."

They followed the girl down an ill-lit, narrow passageway into a low, smoke-filled room. An old man sat by a peat fire, a pipe between his lips. He looked up as they came in but he showed no surprise, merely saying as the girl had said, "Good nicht, Maister," and then was silent, puffing at his pipe.

The girl pushed forward a rude wooden stool. Glenfinnan lifted it, putting it down close to the smoldering fire. "Sit here," he said to Elspeth, and

she obeyed, throwing back her blue cape and pushing the soft brown hair away from her face.

The room was close, the air being thick with the odor of smoldering peat and of stale tobacco. It was scantily and poorly furnished, but there was a plaid pinned across the wall, on one side, and its striking color lent brightness to the room. To Elspeth's quick sensitiveness it seemed a symbol of all that lay beyond the grayness and the smoke. It spoke of the Highlands; of mystery and understanding; of deeds to do and dangers to brave.

The girl came up to them carrying a plate of oatcakes, a pot of tea, and two cups. The tea had evidently been made ready for their coming. There was an unpleasant, sweet odor from the teapot. Elspeth drank half a cupful and ate an oatcake. The silence was becoming oppressive to her. She glanced around, then at her cousin, but his eyes were fixed on the old man, who still sat puffing at his pipe at the other side of the fire.

Elspeth saw suddenly that the girl was looking at her, and that the glance from her dark eyes had a knife-like keenness. She wore a coarse dress, and her dark hair was bound closely about her head, a

curl escaping at one side. She did not seem in the least surprised at the arrival of Elspeth and Glenfinnan. She took the cups, when they had finished, and putting them on a table by the fire, sat down herself on a stool next to the old man, who turned at last toward them, taking the pipe from his mouth and speaking harshly.

"How shall we ken the lass is fair straight and brave enough?" he queried, turning his gaze full upon Elspeth, whose eyes met his eagerly. Glenfinnan answered the old man.

"You have my word that she is brave and straight and devoted to the cause of the Prince," he said, and his words, as well as his presence there, gave the girl a sense of strength and protection. He stood up, his brown cloak falling about his slender figure, his straight dark hair touching the white frills of his collar.

"She's verra young. She's but a bairn," muttered the old man, puffing at his pipe again.

"She is sixteen. You must take for granted what I tell you. She is true to the cause of the Prince. She puts it first in her life. She is strong and healthy. She can ride well. She has little fear."

The old man raised himself in his chair and fixed his eyes on Elspeth. "Ye will have word when we'll have need of thee here below. A word will be handed ye, but mind, lass, mind well—ye may be sent a long way from here!" He leaned still farther forward and his glance was not unkindly.

For a moment the room was spinning before Elspeth's eyes. Her heart beat wildly and there was a singing in her ears. This was reality, the outcome of all her dreaming in the top of the hawthorn tree. An hour before, she had been just a girl playing with a dolls' house in her own schoolroom. Now she was one marked for service.

"Will ye give your word that ye will be faithful?" the old man's voice sounded far off.

"I promise that I will do all that is asked of me for Prince Charlie," she answered, glad that her voice was clear and did not tremble.

Glenfinnan turned toward her, his face white in the dusky room. "You can still be brave and loyal to the cause without pledging yourself. You may still wait for a year, until you are older." There was great concern in Glenfinnan's voice.

"I am ready now," she answered him.

The old man spoke at once. "She will do. She is the right one." He knocked his pipe against the rusty side of the grate as he spoke. Glenfinnan touched Elspeth's arm.

"We must go at once," he said, and with a brief good night to the occupants of the room, he and Elspeth went out, hurrying through the dark corridor to the gloom of the alley-way outside.

They walked quickly when once they had climbed the steep stairway. Glenfinnan did not speak more than once or twice until they reached the garden gate at Harth House. Then he turned to his cousin, one hand on the old iron door of the brick garden wall, and said in a low voice, "Ellie, listen to me, listen well. You are very young. I am sadly puzzled to know whether I have done the right thing in allowing you to ally yourself with us in these terrible times. For I fear, Ellie, that they *will* be terrible. All of England and most of Scotland are against us, and the French can only be half-hearted in their efforts to help. It comes over me how young you are—just a girl!"

Glenfinnan looked wistfully at Elspeth, but she returned the look with one of glad courage. Fear

seemed to have slipped away from her and she laughed, the sound ringing lightly in the somber twilight. "You are only seventeen and a half, yourself, Glen—you are just a boy. Oh, I am glad indeed that we are young: I care for nothing now but keeping my word to help the Prince."

"Come quickly. I shall be well scolded as it is for keeping you so late." Glenfinnan pushed Elspeth through the gate and they ran across the garden. Charmaine was waiting for them by the door at the end of the paved court.

"You are late, but no one has noticed. They are talking, all of them, in the drawing-room. There is more news. Old Mr. Twigg is here and the Boomers, Lady McAllister and some others. There is fresh news. The government has set thousands of pounds on Prince Charlie's head. The Prince's army is marching east to Invergarry. Glen, Glen, it frightens me. They are coming nearer, a great army of wild Highlanders!" Charmaine was pale. She caught Elspeth's hand. Glenfinnan went past her into the drawing-room without a word. The girls followed slowly, their arms entwined.

As Charmaine had said, the drawing-room was

full of people. Fergus was passing trays of pasties and glasses of wine. Lady McCray was talking with Aunt Milly on the sofa by the window, or rather seemed to be listening to Aunt Milly's chatter. Old Mr. Twigg was here, there and everywhere, telling each one all that he had heard and all that he thought of the situation.

Elspeth made her way to Lady McAllister and stood shyly near her. "She is the only one in the room besides Glen and me who loves the Prince. She is listening to Aunt Milly, but inside—she is laughing at her!"

Lady McAllister looked up at the moment and held out her hand to Elspeth. She was tall and slight, and her dark hair was almost untouched with powder. She wore a crimson velvet cloak over her frock. "It is long since I have seen you, Ellie. You must come with your pretty cousin and drink tea with me very soon," she said.

Then Elspeth spoke quickly, impulsively, with a furtive glance at Aunt Milly, whose attention was at the moment fortunately taken by Mrs. Twigg.

"I should like to come very soon, if you please, your ladyship, and I should like to come alone."

Lady McAllister looked at her smilingly, and then grew suddenly grave. She drew Elspeth close to her side. "Come, by all means, very soon and alone, my child," she answered.

At sight of the smile on the handsome dark face, Elspeth took courage. "I have heard that your ladyship takes great interest in the cause of the Prince," she said very softly. "I, too, have the cause at heart and pray nightly for its success!" As she whispered, the color deepened in her cheeks, and she finished quickly with an entreaty. "I pray your ladyship's pardon if I have said aught to offend you!" The next moment Lady McAllister bent and kissed her, saying gayly and in a voice that anyone in the room might have heard, "You and I will then talk together of all that interests us."

CHAPTER V

LONG branches of red berries swayed in the wind. They had been white and waxen an hour before, but the glow of the sunset had turned them red. It had made crimson ribbons out of dried rowan vines that trailed carelessly through winding morasses. It had turned the whole listening stretch of glens, of secret, hidden valleys, and ponderous rocks into a gold and red enchantment.

A small, slight girl stood high on a knoll, shading her eyes from the radiance of the afterglow, which

lent a purple luster to her short black hair. She wore a dark, straight frock of rich material. Looking first to the right and then to the left, she called out several times in a high, clear voice, "Ho, Fergus!" and again "Ho, Fergus, welcome!" Her voice echoed on and on through narrow waterways and deep rocky caverns, past thundering waterfalls and across distant moors until it seemed to still its ringing sweetness in the heart of a far-off forest.

The light faded gradually. The girl still stood on the knoll, straining her eyes and calling at intervals.

Suddenly far away something seemed to answer her. She listened, uncertain whether it might not be only an echo. Then she called again joyously, "Ho, Fergus, welcome!" And now through the faint amethyst light, as sweet as Roland's horn must have sounded to his followers, there came the words—"Great news! I am coming. Great and wondrous news!"

The girl sank to her knees, digging her thin, trembling fingers into the damp earth between the rocks. "Great news," she repeated between sobbing breaths. Then she stood up and after an instant's hesitation, gazing back at the endless stretches of

scarlet and pink heather moors, she turned and ran swiftly, unseeingly, over golden bracken, past idle streams, and on and on, breathing quickly, her hands at her sides. As she ran on—down, down into the deep valley, the darkness was intensified by a floating mist. She saw, in the distance, quickly moving figures of scarlet and green, as through a silver veil.

She did not stop until she came to the base of a gigantic pile of rocks. Then she paused, breathing rapidly, and as she stood with one foot on a piece of jutting granite, an old man came toward her. He limped quickly, leaning on a heavy, twisted, oak stick, whose gold top was crusted with jewels that blazed like the sunset. The old man's face shone wanly white through the drifting mist. His gray hair, untouched with powder, fell across the rich deep red velvet of his mantle.

The girl said quickly as she met him, "Fergus has called a message that there is wondrous news, Grandfather. I did not wait for speech with him, but came at once to you. She put out her hand to support him. Astonished though she was at seeing him alone, she did not express her surprise. She was used to con-

cealing her feelings. As they began very slowly to ascend the great mass of rocks, the girl realized that it would be no easy task to bring the frail, trembling old man safely to the top. She turned and looked back. One call would bring a dozen faithful servants to their aid, but she knew that her grandfather was ashamed of his fast-failing strength and would be happier just to lean upon her. They made slow progress. Now and then the old man muttered, "I shall wait for Fergus at the top. It is there in the open I shall have word of my Prince." Now and then his quick-moving black eyes glanced back over his shoulders.

"Fergus will not be long in reaching us," the girl said, soothingly. She gave all of her young strength in helping him, and at last they reached the open top of the rocks. Now that they were above the mist, there was something fearsome in the wild, twisted stretches of endless scarlet and purple and gold that lay below them. A faint rose still touched the wood. The old man leaned against the side of a rock, breathing heavily. Then the girl spoke quickly. "That is Fergus' step. He has overtaken us."

They heard the sound of small bits of granite

falling as someone climbed the rocks. Then a voice called eagerly, "It is I, Fergus!" The next moment a short, squarely built man came climbing up the rocks, his rough cape half falling off his shoulders, his dark hair flying in the wind.

"The Prince goes straight as the eagle's flight to Edinburgh, master," he cried, and when he came up to them he knelt before the old man and kissed his hand. Then, standing up, he bowed before the girl. He went on speaking before the others could answer. "They are fair daft in Edinburgh, Sir Hugh! They sent General Cape. He and his men switched at the mountain wall and marched to Inverness. Our army with Prince Charlie slipped in behind them, and they marched on to Dalwhinine and Perth."

The girl stood with her hands across her eyes, her head slightly bowed. Sir Hugh Roderick closed his eyes an instant as though in prayer. "Your news is good beyond any word or thought, Fergus Macforden," he said. He put his frail arm on Fergus' strong one and they began slowly to descend the rocks on the other side. Their way was down so narrow a path that they were obliged to walk single file. The girl went first, then Sir Hugh, and last

Fergus who held the old man's arm firm behind. The path was bordered on each side by thick bushes of gorse, and as they made their slow descent they seemed to lose themselves in the prickly gold that almost covered them. They could hear the cries of snipe, but as they reached the base of the rocks on the other side, silence greeted them, a silence almost sinister in this bleak and solitary spot.

Something loomed before them, seeming at first only a part of the rocks and brush. It was unbelievably, almost impossibly, a house, gray as the rocks, a part of them; so cleverly constructed that it was difficult to see where the rocks left off and the house began. It was more than a house: it was almost a castle, for although so hidden, it streached lengthwise for some distance, and beyond it were smaller buildings and beyond them some huts, hidden in the thickets, some (like the house itself) a part of the sullen stretch of rocks and waste land.

A light shone from a grated paling at one side of a bolted oaken door. The girl raised her voice and made a sound something like the hoot of an owl. Immediately the door was unbolted and opened by a bearded man in a tartan tunic, with a piece of fur

thrown across his shoulder. He bowed and stepped back as the three came inside.

Fergus turned to him, speaking quickly. "Our men were too canny for Cape and his blundering soldiers. Our army will be in Edinburgh before the week is out, Starf!" Starf caught his breath, and the light from a torch in an iron standard just behind him showed a sudden sparkle of tears in his eyes. He and Fergus supported Sir Hugh, who had suddenly turned weak, through the low hall into the large room beyond, which was lighted by a huge fire of logs. Two dogs lying by the fire pricked their ears and then came pattering across the stone floor to fawn and bark at Fergus' feet. He gave them a kindly word of welcome—"So, Patter and Flicker, you are glad to see me alive and here, my lads!"

Here and there on the floor were scattered fur rugs, and faded tapestries covered the walls. The furniture was hewn of rough wood. Long curtains of heavy red silk covered the grated windows. So low was the house set, so closely did the great jagged rocks hug it, that the room had always to be lighted by flaring torches, even at midday and in

summer. Daylight seldom touched the somber and wild richness of Thistle Inn.

Fergus assisted Sir Hugh to his usual seat—a high-backed chair close to the fire. The girl, Cherry, stood with her back to the fire, her eyes on Fergus. A short time before, her demeanor toward her grandfather had been gentle enough as she helped him up the rock; she might have been any dutiful daughter of sixteen. But now, as she faced Fergus there was something in her look that revealed great power, so evident that both the men felt admiration for her.

"Tell what you know, and quickly, Fergus. I must start by daybreak and there is much to do here yet tonight."

Fergus answered calmly, but his eyes glittered in the wavering flicker of the rushlight. "You yourself, Cherry, brought the news of the Prince's landing at Loch Shiel. It is like a wave rising, rising—like a tide sweeping all over and pushing our men forward. Three hundred Appin Stuarts joined us. Lord Lovat himself—mad as he is—gave his all for us. We are marching on to Dalwhinine and nothing can stop us. Cape's army is asleep. It wandered toward Inverness while we came over Corryarick."

Fergus knelt suddenly, taking the frail hand of the old chief in both of his. "You who are head of all Highlanders may well be proud," he said.

The old man's eyes rested on his kinsman's rugged face for a moment, and then moved to that of his granddaughter. "I am proud of you and of all our men—and most of all of Cherry," he said. Fergus turned toward the girl, his face alight. "Yes, sire, there is no girl in all the world like Cherry. She has more wisdom for her sixteen years than many a graybeard."

A faint smile touched Cherry's lips for an instant. "There is naught to be proud of in that I have given my services for the Prince. But there is another girl as ready as I for service, who should be praised the more because she has been delicately reared in her uncle's home in Edinburgh—sheltered always; yet she is ready, she is pledged. I have seen Elspeth Craigie. She is cousin to young Channing—who is to be called out for active service within a fortnight —and granddaughter of Malcolm of Loch Shiel. Word will come for Starf when he is to show her the way. She can, like me, go everywhere, a child unnoticed. She can gather news and carry news and

watch. She can go in a drummer boy's disguise straight to the heart of Charlie's army. But come, I must sleep for some hours and then be off at cock-crow."

As she finished, Cherry leaned over the old man and kissed his forehead. He caught one of her hands and held it against his cheek. "You have been with us but three days and now you are off. It is right and well that it should be so. When I give you up to the cause I do the little left for me to do." Sir Hugh smiled sadly, peering up at the young girl.

Cherry held out her hand to Fergus. "You will need rest after your tedious ride, and I will be off before sun-up. God speed our cause! Farewell!" And she was gone out of the room as swiftly and silently as she had run across the bracken.

The two men, suddenly bereft, could only watch the dying fire with anxious faces.

"I fear because we are so hidden, so alone. There are many of us but there is treachery on all sides. Cherry is safe enough, God knows, in these glens and as far as our lands extend, but the fear that touches me always is of her being a marked figure. It is well that this Elspeth Craigie can help her.

Hugh has seen her. He watches always. He has sent word that she can be trusted." The old man spoke slowly, feebly, and his eyes closed in weariness.

Fergus stood silent, his thoughts in a whirl. They were giving all; their lives; their property; their dearest—for this wild cause, for this strange, beautiful Prince. And against them was the power of the English throne. He knew the recklessness of the Highlanders—of his own kin, their friends, and the great masses of underlings that swarmed about Thistle Inn. Here all clans seemed to meet; here Sir Hugh Roderick, in spite of his failing strength, held undisputed power, chief above all chiefs, wielding authority and dealing out kindness and punishment, more as a father than as a despot. Through all the countryside for miles and miles men did him honor. Fergus watched him sadly as he sat half-dozing in his chair, the scarlet of his robe bringing out the fragile delicacy of his face. Then Fergus' thoughts flew to Edinburgh and the advancing army.

Cherry, after she had left her grandfather and cousin, ran quickly down a long, winding hall and, turning to the left at its far end, entered a passage

that resembled a narrow dungeon. It was long and so narrow that occasionally, as she ran, its rough granite sides touched her. A silvery light shone at the far end, and as she approached it voices reached her ears—the sounds of pipes, of laughter, and of many people moving about.

She slackened her steps and came out of the dungeon-like passage. A cool breath of bracken-scented air swept her face. She shaded her eyes for an instant as she came into the twilight. Bonfires here and there made dancing flashes of scarlet through the thin mist, and sitting around them, or hurrying here and there, or standing in groups in lazy gossip, were a large number of men and women, the firelight softening the women's wild faces and making the men's bare knees shine like bronze.

As they saw Cherry the nearest ones turned quickly toward her. Three old Highlanders in the group touched their foreheads with their hands; the fourth, a younger man with a white face, bowed clumsily. All waited for her to speak.

"There is news. Fergus brings it after a hard journey," she said, and then told them Fergus' story. They listened, their wild eyes devouring her face.

"It fair stops the breath, Donald, wi' them and all the MacNeals, the MacTosh lads, and all eight of the MacSwaynes. God above!" "Our men in a city—in town! God with us! What a thought!" "They're marching and riding toward the bonny town o' Edinburgh!" Such ejaculations followed Cherry as she went on through the various groups. Her news spread like wildfire; and now mingled with the shouting of hoarse birds and the shrill barking of dogs was the general clamor of the excited multitude.

Cherry ran on through a deep thicket of underbrush, coming out onto a platform of rocks. She stood still and called, "Starf!" and a voice above her answered her at once. "I'm here, Cherry, and I have made a bit of melody as clear as moonlight on a waterfall and all with a reed pipe put together in a wee hour."

Cherry called sternly. "Come down, Starf. Come at once." The next moment the thickset figure of a boy of sixteen emerged apparently from out the very rocks themselves. His dark locks blew about his face in the moorland breeze, his rich dark tunic was heavily embroidered in gold, his scarlet kilt

blended with the bronze scarlet of his stalwart limbs. He smiled at her, heedless of her frown.

"You are daft, Starf, playing to the moon on a reed pipe, when you know well we must be off within the hour. Come, there is news—our men are driving straight for Edinburgh. There is work to do, and you go daydreaming!" The boy answered her slowly, as though his thoughts were still far away. "The moon is not full for another half hour. A messenger has come with fresh news."

She was so startled at his words that she came close and caught his arm. "What madness do you say? You sit here on a rock as though you had forgotten all the world and yet you say——"

Starf interrupted her with a laugh. "Aye, a messenger. He says the Prince and all our army go forward like swift birds. They have crossed the Fords like one man, as though they were bewitched. We gave him brandy and rubbed him well before he spoke at all." As he finished Starf raised his brown eyes to the sky. "We'd best be off. I'll have sword and fife at the top of the rowan hollow by the first rock in a half-hour's time—" and swiftly, before she could answer him, he was gone.

An hour later, they rode forward, side by side, but the girl, who before had worn about her shoulders a neat kerchief of the colors of a golden eagle's wing, was now clothed in a brown tunic, breeches, and boots. A close-fitting brown cap covered her short locks. As she rode through the night with Starf, she no longer looked a girl—instead, Cherry was a silent, watchful young lad whose wits gathered secrets, whose eyes saw everything.

They rode on, the two of them, chums since childhood, through the wonder of the moorland night.

CHAPTER VI

MOONLIGHT cast shimmering pools and squares and patches on the gray courtyards of Linlithgow Palace, and through the sweetness of the September night the ancient towers and turrets loomed majestically. Swans, their white plumage faintly green in the uncertain light, slept with their proud heads tucked under their wings, close to the edge of the loch. Now and then a male swan, mindful of a brood of fledglings carefully guarded by their mother under a ledge of rock, raised his slender neck and hissed venomously when a louder burst of laughter and singing came from the open palace windows.

Trees close to the loch, overshadowing it in places, glowed like silver, and a figure walking back and forth under their shelter might have been a knight clad in gleaming armor. His tartan, his bare legs, the velvet mantle about his shoulders, all were

moonlight-touched. He seemed a part of the sad, gleaming silence of the night. Now and then he stopped in his restless pacing and, standing for a moment motionless, listened, as though to something elusive and far away, something perhaps beyond mortal ken. He was so deep in thought that it was some time before he realized that someone was watching him—a figure so small and brown that it seemed a part of the shadows and the low-hanging trees and branches. The man stared without speaking. The brown figure came swiftly forward and, doffing a velvet cap, knelt in the moonlight. She lifted her face and spoke, still kneeling. "I did not dream that at the end of my journey I should have speech with your Royal Highness," she said.

Charles Stuart moved forward through the shadows and came close to the kneeling figure. "Rise up, lad, and have speech with me." As the figure rose, the Prince went on. "You are Cherry, and if you would kneel to me, be sure that I would gladly kneel to you, for of all who have done me service—knights, crofters, vassals, and most chivalrous defenders—none have so bravely dared for me since first I landed on the island of Eriskay."

While the Prince was speaking, Cherry stood as a soldier might stand at attention. Her hands trembled and she looked so slight and brown in the eerie light that she might have been a late autumn leaf about to fly off into space. She put one hand over her face for a moment, and shook with a great sob that seemed to rend her whole body. Prince Charles stood towering above her. He made a gesture of pity as though to comfort her. "How now, lad, and what is this?" he asked and the uneasiness of his voice strengthened her. She drew her hand across her eyes and said, "'Tis naught, Sire. I was but overcome at your graciousness. I have my great reward for my service in your kind words. List well, Sire. You will not linger at Edinburgh. A messenger will reach you when you are to move."

Prince Charlie smiled through the darkness. "What a lad you are, Cherry! How is it that you know?"

"I go here and there and everywhere, Sire. O, Sire—" and quickly, almost without realizing what she was doing, Cherry knelt again and, clasping her hands, looked up, her face pallid in the moonlight.

"Sire, as I kneel here, believe me, trust me in this that I would tell you. There is the name of a great city in your heart—it is London. In all humility I counsel you, never throw away your last stake, most gracious Sire. To reach London you must encounter two Hanoverian armies. If your armies get as far as London, there will have been no greater miracle in any land, at any time!"

Prince Charlie stared at Cherry. "You see much, my lad," he said.

"I see far, Sire," Cherry replied.

Prince Charlie smiled. "What do you see?" he asked and the still, silver-green night seemed to listen for the answer. It came slowly, honestly, tremblingly. "I see disaster!"

There was silence by the loch, and then the quick rebuke born of a prince's anger. "You see too much, and you say too much, and you overstep yourself. You come to me on the eve of victory and prattle of failure!"

Cherry had risen to her feet and was standing with bowed head. The Prince's voice softened at his next words. "Go you to the palace for food and wine and rest."

Cherry turned slowly, and the next instant was lost among the deep shadows and bushes. She was too tired for any thought of food, and, trembling and weak, sank down close to a low-hanging casement near the shadow of an old yew tree.

Charles Edward Louis Philip Casimir Stuart paced the shore beside the loch, heedless that the night was passing.

So often during the years of his childhood and young manhood he had dreamed of this very night, of moonlight on Linlithgow Palace, of being in possession of it with all of Scotland rallied around him and his men. He had been different always from the others of his family; from his grave, quiet father, James II, from his still graver younger brother. He had thought and dreamed always of Scotland, of the Highlands, of giving to his father the crown of Scotland that was his by right. That had been his ideal, and it seemed now, here by the shimmering loch, that at last it was coming true. His grandfather had fled from Oliver Cromwell; Cromwell who had said he would show kings that they had a price on their heads. James II had fled to Rome, and there his son, James Francis Stuart,

Chevalier de St. George, had grown up, and there he, Prince Charlie, had been born.

It was a far cry from the great palace in Rome to the edge of the wild Scottish moorlands. It was a great risk and a great adventure, but Prince Charlie looked up at the stars and laughed!

CHAPTER VII

VOICES were raised high in the Boomer schoolroom; an argument was going on. The Boomers, one and all, were fond of arguments.

"It is too stupid to consider—a schoolroom tea. 'The misses and master Boomer entertained their Edinburgh friends in their schoolroom. Hot milk and bannocks were served at six o'clock. The as-

semblage then departed, well satisfied with an excellent evening's entertainment'—*bach!*" There was a burst of laughter from the others as Lillias Boomer ended indignantly. Hugh, her brother, a fair lad of sixteen, called out, "Hear—hear!" over his shoulder as he knelt by the schoolroom fire, toasting bread.

"Well said, Lil," commented Tabs Boomer, a thin, plain child, greatly resembling her twin, Betsy, who sat beside her.

Lillias Boomer sat at the end of the long schoolroom table pouring tea for the hungry brood who had gathered around it.

But Hood Boomer defended the idea. "I see nothing strange in our having our friends here where we can be quite by ourselves. You know well what it will be like in the drawing-room—the servants at the doors, the parents and grandmothers and their friends coming in and out and talking politely with our guests—who will not enjoy them in the very least." She reached for a piece of seedcake, and sat down heavily. Hood was plump, with a round face and blue eyes that passed calmly from one to the other of her sisters as they regarded her.

She had straight, sandy hair that fell on each side of her face, just touching her shoulders. She ate the cake meditatively, silent for a moment; then she said firmly, "We shall have the party here."

"Oh, is that so, Miss Hood Boomer!" jeered her brother, as he came up to the table with two pieces of nicely browned toast stuck on the end of the toasting fork. "Hood says a thing, and that makes it law, for is she not Captain Boomer—Major Boomer—even General Boomer?" Hugh dropped a piece of hot toast on his sister's plate as he spoke. She buttered it calmly, eating it with slow, thoughtful bites.

"We shall have the party here!" she repeated. There was something final in her words, as if they settled the matter. She had spoken, and whatever clamor of disagreement might continue in the circle around her, it would not affect the decision. Hood was a person of few words, but she was far-seeing and very practical. She was used to much hubbub around her, to high voices and disagreement, to reckless speech, and laughter and confusion, and she paid no attention to any of it. She spread a piece of bread with butter and plum jam and ate it slowly.

"Have your baby party in the schoolroom if you like," remarked Lillias languidly, pouring out a second cup of tea for her brother.

Hood smiled, knowing the question was settled. She had been sure that the others would come around to her way of thinking; they always had. She did not pay any more attention to the conversation until someone mentioned Elspeth. She looked up.

"I shall talk a great deal with Elspeth Craigie on the night of our party. She has more sense in one of her fingers than all of this family."

Lillias raised her eyebrows at Hugh, who laughed. He was used to his sister's odd remarks and rather liked them. He realized suddenly, as he stood looking at her, the toasting fork still in one hand, that although only fourteen she was the outstanding personality of their family, dominating, individual.

"You are always conceited, Hood. Why should you think that Elspeth Craigie should be so much your friend, a lass nearly three years your senior and with many interests that do not concern you?" Lillias Boomer spoke sharply, and underneath her

words lay jealousy, Hood knew. She went on calmly with the tea and, as she did so, some words of Elspeth's came to her: "You Boomers are all our cherished friends, but of all the family it is you, dear Hood, that I love the best."

Hood remembered the afternoon well. She and Elspeth had been looking at some old prints of the Highlands, dreaming of the wonderful days when their ancestors had lived and ruled the glens. There was something fine about Hood, which prevented her repeating Elspeth's words to her brothers and sisters. She leaned her elbows on the table, her chin on her plump hands, and began to speak of the supper for the following evening. Immediately a hubbub of argument began all about her. She listened placidly, knowing that she and the cook had already decided on trifle and cheese pasties.

The quiet, even routine of the Channing household seemed to go on as usual, but there was a current of unrest underneath it. Evan Channing was nervous and seemed to be constantly in and out of the house. People came in the evening and stood talking in groups in the drawing-room. They talked

eagerly, restlessly. There was something puzzled and frightened about them. They did not know what was coming.

Glenfinnan came for the Boomers' party. Everyone wondered, because he did not care for parties and he was not sociable. Cudsy was the only one who expressed herself about it. She had come upstairs to inspect Elspeth and Charmaine after they were dressed. Mrs. Channing and Miss Milly Channing were there also in the large stately bedroom, and two serving women knelt on the floor arranging the soft, wide ruffles of the girls' skirts. Cudsy made a deep curtsey and inspected the dresses approvingly. She had been in the household for so many years that she was a privileged servant and knew it.

"Master Glenfinnan should be proud to accompany the young ladies. He is a brave lad, if it please you, Madam." Cudsy turned her broad face toward Glenfinnan's mother as she spoke, making another little curtsey. "He is here again so that he may not miss a word about the advance of Charles Stuart's Highland army. You may be sure of that, Madam," she said and there was something curious in her tone

which made both of Elspeth's aunts turn and look at her.

"Yes, yes, Cudsy," Miss Milly said nervously. Then someone called that the boys were at the door and they hurried down the broad stairway. Glenfinnan was waiting at the foot. His face showed oddly white under the soft blaze of rushlights by the great oaken outside door as they went out into the dark twilight. A storm was brewing and already there were points of gold in the gathering gloom of the city below them. Three sedan chairs waited outside the portal. They shone delicately in the gathering dusk—grayish blue, faintly gilded. It was in one of them that Elspeth's own grandmother had ridden when first she had come to Edinburgh, a wild Highland girl who had never grown used to city ways although she had married a Channing.

Charmaine was chatting excitedly. "All our friends will be there, and there will be so much fun. Hugh will sing a ballad and dance, and Hood will be her own funny self." She stepped into her chair as she went on speaking, a dainty figure in her rose mantle. Her serving maid stepped in after her, sitting behind her.

Elspeth and Glenfinnan were alone in their chair, the other serving woman accompanying the ladies, who were also going to the Boomers' for a sip of wine and a gossip with the older members of the family. There would be but one topic among the elders at the Boomers' that evening: Prince Charlie and his men, and what General Cape and his army were doing.

"There is a strangeness about the city, Glen. Tell me, do you also feel it? I know you do."

"The Prince is advancing. He has a gallant army. Do you sense what that means? He has been received at Linlithgow, where Mary Queen of Scots was born. The news is posted in the squares. They will be all agog with it at the Boomers' tonight. It will be known throughout the length and breadth of the city and all the town beyond us. The very walls are ringing with it!" There was a little choke in Glenfinnan's voice as he gazed out of the square window of the chair. They were going down hill, and the lights of the city bobbed up and down in front of them.

"We are on our way to a schoolroom party at the Boomers', and all the while in the countryside

beyond us wonderful things are happening," Elspeth said.

Glenfinnan smiled as the chair stopped in front of the stately Boomer mansion. He gave his hand to Elspeth, helping her out of the chair. "Our time is coming," he said, and at his words her heart beat with a great excitement. It had all seemed so shadowy and far away the last few days—the hovel down in the town, the old man and the girl, the promise that Elspeth had given; but at Glenfinnan's words it seemed real again. All the evening his words rang in her ears—"Our time is coming!"

There was an air of happiness and carefree enjoyment all through the Boomer house. "It's such a happy house always, isn't it, Ellie? It is so different from ours!" exclaimed Charmaine as they went across the broad upper hall toward the clamor of laughter and voices in the long schoolroom. Elspeth gave her cousin a little hug for answer. How sweet Charmaine was, and how she loved her! It came to her suddenly, overwhelmingly, that she might have to leave Charmaine and all that had been so dear to her. "They don't know it. No one but Glen

knows that I am different from them all. I am marked for service." Her heart beat heavily, and Hood Boomer, who had come to greet her, called out excitedly, "Ellie, Ellie, your hands are cold. Come quickly and dance!"

"I am glad that we are all going to be here in the schoolroom tonight. It is so cozy and warm and—safe!" Elspeth answered impulsively. She was glad beyond words to be there in the familiar Boomer schoolroom surrounded by old and loved friends, good cheer and fun all about her. She knew in her heart that she loved it all dearly.

Hood whispered to her a little later: "You are glad to be here, but you are not thinking of us at all. I know that you are thinking of the Prince."

Elspeth laughed excitedly as she answered. "Part of me is here, but yes, you are right, part of me is off—somewhere."

"Where?" demanded Hood. She wore a rather tight-fitting blue frock that just touched her ankles, with a soft frill of lace at her throat. She held Elspeth's hand and stood close beside her, even when Hugh and some other boys and girls came up to them.

"Where?" repeated Hugh laughingly. He had not heard the first part of the conversation.

"Off in the wild moors—galloping," Elspeth answered, laughing too. They caught her laughter and the gayety increased. Hugh played a bagpipe, and they suddenly found themselves, boys and girls, joining in the wild beauty of the Highland Fling. There was a murmur of voices from the drawing-room below, where the elders and their friends were spending the evening.

Glenfinnan spoke a word with Elspeth as she stood next to him after dancing. "They are chatting and jabbering below about things of which they know so little! They cannot believe that the Prince is almost at Kirkliston. They will not believe it yet. Father and Mr. Boomer are urging the students in the University to go out and help to defend the city against Prince Charlie's army, so they must really fear in their hearts." His words were interrupted by Hugh Boomer who had come up and bowed before Elspeth.

"May we not join in a gavotte, if you please, Mistress Elspeth?" he asked. Elspeth nodded eagerly and they crossed the room together. Mistress Mc-

Masters, the children's governess, was playing softly on the spinet which had been brought up from the drawing-room, and Lillias Boomer accompanied her on the violin. Groups of laughing boys and girls were forming couples for the gavotte.

"The gavotte is one of the good things that Mary our Queen of Scots gave to us," commented Madam Boomer, the children's grandmother, as she came into the room, leaning on a gilt cane, her velvet draperies falling about her, and the fine lace kerchief over her powdered hair framing her handsome old face. She was the Nan Sheffield who had been Elspeth's grandmother's great friend. She addressed her remarks to Hood who came running up to her.

"Grandmother, I want to speak with you. I find Hugh disagreeable. He said to me, 'You are always putting yourself forward.' He will not let me even speak with Elspeth Craigie, who is my great friend. You know, Grandmother, we are friends as you and Elspeth's grandmother used to be."

Madam Boomer's dark eyes regarded her smilingly. "Why do you not stay with your guests? You

seem to be running away," she remarked. Hood shrugged her plump shoulders. She knew also that to her there was no one in all the big cheerful Boomer household who was so interesting as Grandmother. They talked of the old Highland days together and all the recent exciting weeks when news of Prince Charlie's advance swept the city. She knew that her grandmother was silently rejoicing.

"I find the party a little tiresome. I think I will look in at the kitchen, if you please, Grandmother. Do you not feel it in the air tonight that the Prince is really coming?" Hood's eyes smiled up at her grandmother's dark ones. There was a light in Madam Boomer's eyes too. "Yes, yes, child, the Prince is coming, and I have lived to see the day," she said.

Someone came across the room to greet her grandmother, and Hood slipped out into the hall. There was no one about for the moment and she went slowly down the broad stairs, the flare from the candles in iron candlesticks making odd shapes on the dark walls. The hum of voices reached her from behind the closed drawing-room doors. She walked on down some more stairs and along a

poorly lighted corridor toward the kitchen region. She thought that she would see how the preparations for supper were going forward, and perhaps taste a dish here and there. She was a favorite of the pastry-cook. She stumbled over a rough place in the stone floor and as she straightened herself she looked up. There was a grated window just above her. A faint gray light came through it. Hood stopped and stared up at it. It faced the wide entrance hall of the front of the house, and from this vantage point one could watch people going in and out of the house. Someone was up there now—and looking at her!

Hood stood still, and the watcher at the window looked down at her. It was a slight figure of a boy clad in snuff-colored mantle. His thin, dark face was etched against the grayness outside, and seemed to mingle with the misty grayness of the corridor.

"What do you there, spying at the house?" Hood asked.

"I am waiting for someone, and I have a message," the boy answered.

Hood's eyes shone with excitement. A few minutes before she had felt bored. Now she was here

in this lonely corridor talking to a mysterious boy who was waiting for someone, and who had a message!

"I'll take the message for you if you like," she said, returning the piercing look her onlooker gave her. Then she heard someone behind her, and, turning, saw Glenfinnan. "You are a good girl, Hood Boomer. How you came here I do not know, but I trust you to keep silent," he said.

The color rushed to Hood's face. She answered eagerly: "It shall be as you wish. I shall be silent." She gave one glance at the waiting figure of the boy outside. Then she turned and walked away. She longed to stay, but after Glenfinnan's words nothing would have induced her to do so. He trusted her. Her face glowed with excitement. She was a part of a secret, a part of a mystery!

Glenfinnan watched Hood until she reached the stairway, her plump blue figure and yellow braids fading into the grayness. There was something about the deliberate way Hood walked, the resolute set of her head and shoulders, that was pathetic. Glenfinnan knew as she walked away that she had longed to stay. He knew, too, that she could be

trusted. He saw that she hesitated at the top of the stairs and then went on. Someone had passed her. He showed no surprise when he saw that it was Lady McAllister. She was standing in the shadow, waiting for speech with him.

The silent figure outside the grating stood motionless. Glenfinnan turned, speaking softly. "Cherry, tell me—what news?" The boy sitting on the window ledge smiled and the smile wrinkled his small face in a delightful way. He had odd, dark eyes, and in his snuff-colored mantle and close cap he looked not unlike a brownie.

"The General Cape switched before the mountain wall of Corryarick. The whole army marched to Inverness—God Himself knows why! There is only the mountain wall between our Prince and his army and their march on to Perth. Lord Lovat joined them at Invergarry. They are on their way, and the Prince is right gallant, I tell you. He moves like magic. It is his song and his word that puts the heart into his men!"

"Prince Charlie—long life to him! What a golden future! We are a part of it all, helping. That is true, is it not, Cherry?"

Glenfinnan had spoken hotly, impulsively, the light of joy in his eyes. He looked up at the brown figure on the window ledge, who remained silent. "Speak, Cherry, speak," he said. He came close to the window and there was something like entreaty in his voice. "You go everywhere, Cherry, you are here and there. You go sometimes to the Highlands. Tell me there will be glory for Prince Charlie!"

The figure above him smiled down at him. "Prince Charlie will come to Edinburgh. There will be dancing. Men, women and children will dance." Cherry leaned forward as she went on speaking and although she did not raise her voice it seemed to Glenfinnan that the words boomed through the silent corridor. "After the dancing there will be blood and death and failure."

Glenfinnan broke in angrily, saying, "Cherry, lad, you are in a sad mood today. You could employ yourself better than by sitting on a window ledge, prophesying evil."

Cherry smiled faintly. Then still leaning forward she spoke quickly. "You will fancy better what I tell you now—what I found out when I learned

from the old man where to find you: you are to *fight!*"

This time to Glenfinnan's ears the very rafters seemed to ring with Cherry's words.

CHAPTER VIII

ELSPETH was listening at the open kitchen window, her hands grasping the window ledge, Bumble purring unnoticed beside her. Her heart seemed to beat like thunder. She was listening and longing for the sound of bagpipes. Every bit of her was concentrated on listening. It had been a strange day. Her uncle Evan had not come to breakfast. He had drunk a glass of ale and gone out, the servants said. The aunts were pale; even Aunt Milly scarcely spoke at first. But after they had finished their porridge and before the maids brought in the eggs and kippered herrings she had begun to chatter excitedly.

"I hear on all sides that there is to be the greatest gayety once the Prince is really here. We must think of that. If there are to be balls and frocks and jewels and all sorts of social functions, we shall not mind the fact that a whole Highland army is advancing on us."

"A whole Highland army!" Elspeth thrilled to

the words as she leaned on the kitchen window-sill. A Highland army with Prince Charlie at its head! A dream come true. A wonder come to earth. When would they come. The whole city was waiting. The country was waiting. England was waiting, watching.

The morning had dragged. Elspeth had wandered restlessly about the house and garden. They had not been allowed to go to the dame school in the city because the streets were filled with people and soldiers. Everywhere there was a tense feeling, half of fear and half of delight.

Suddenly Elspeth's hands tightened their hold on the window-sill—a sound was wafted up from the crowded city, a strange, whirling, mixed-up sound, the music of the bagpipes. Such music! Elspeth breathed heavily. All the wild joy and triumph and power and victory, all the strange loyalties, seemed to catch at Elspeth's heart, through the music of the bagpipes. She never knew how she jumped out of the kitchen window. It was a high jump, but she did not fall. She ran across the garden and out of the gate like a flash, the cool September wind blowing her thin skirts about her.

Down the narrow, lane-like roads she ran—down, down, into the heart of the city. And as she drew nearer the crowded squares the louder and more jubilant was the sound of the bagpipes. It sounded above the shouting and the rattle of drums. It was the herald of the Prince's coming!

Elspeth ran straight on without looking to right or left. She sensed that the streets were thronged with people talking in excited groups. The strange, vague tumult of a quiet city suddenly aroused was all about her, but the only sound in her ears was that of the bagpipes.

The throngs were so dense that she found herself wedged in between people taller and stronger than herself, and unable to go forward. She made up her mind quickly what to do. She would climb down to the lowest level and work her way up through some quiet side streets to the square nearest the Netherly Port, and she must hurry. She ran back a little way and then began to make the same descent that she and Glenfinnan had made on the afternoon when he had taken her to the hovel. She recognized the landmarks all along—the broken corner of the wall near which they had stopped for a moment, the

dark door, the dreary, lane-like street. Suddenly she gave a little gasp of surprise.

Someone was sitting on the wall, peering down at her, a boy in a brown cloak, a boy whose dark eyes seemed to search her very soul as they gazed down at her. The next moment he spoke her name. "Mistress Elspeth!"

She stood looking up at him, breathing quickly.

"I am Cherry. You have been told that you might see me. I have a message for you which I had thought to deliver at your uncle's house tonight." He looked at her as he spoke.

Elspeth clasped her hands tightly together, still looking up at the quiet figure on the wall. She had a feeling that the world was suddenly a new place. It was as though she were part of a gold and red and black fairy story, living in it, a part of it all—as though she were one of the characters, moving swiftly.

"Yes, Glen told me about you, last night. He said, 'You will meet a boy called Cherry.'" She came closer to the wall, trying to speak calmly. "What is your message for me?" she asked, and in spite of herself her voice trembled.

"It is only this. You are to wait. Through all the rejoicing and dancing and scarlet lights you are to wait. I cannot tell you at what moment you will be needed. An army is entering the city. There will be high hearts and glad assemblies." The boy said the last words dreamily. It was as though the wild excitement that touched the city had not touched his strange, far-seeing eyes.

Elspeth was torn between her longing to reach the public square and her eagerness to hear more of what Cherry could tell her. "Tell me quickly, Cherry, all I long to know. My cousin Glen is so silent." Elspeth looked up at the lad eagerly.

"Yes, I will tell you more," Cherry said. "I see beyond all this gay madness." Suddenly without warning he put his face down on his arm and a sob shook his frame. Then he looked up, still speaking dreamily. "It was a fortnight ago that I heard them there in the wet bracken far off," he said.

"What is it that you heard, Cherry? Was it the pipes as we hear them now? Tell me, Cherry, what are the pipes that we hear?" Elspeth was trembling as she spoke.

"We hear the pipes of five hundred Camerons.

They are the advance of an army. They came in early this morning as easily as sunshine through Netherly Port. The stupid Whigs had left the portal open. The Camerons overpowered the guard and marched to City Cross, their pipes playing, 'We'll awa to Sherramuir to hand the Whigs an order.' It was not these pipes, Mistress Elspeth, that I heard that night on the Highland moors. It was a fainter sound, and it was not earthly. It meant—disaster." Cherry raised her head, the bright tears touching her lashes. "It is for you and me to look above disaster, Elspeth. It is for such as us to do our little best to help."

Elspeth stood still, the light September wind stirring her thick brown hair. She looked up at Cherry, speaking eagerly.

"Cherry, I shall see him. I shall see Prince Charlie. Tell me that it is true." She put her hand to her heart suddenly. "It is a dream beyond all dreams, coming true," she whispered.

"You will see him. Go straight on past Netherly Port on the low road. Then up to the north market square. Go quickly," Cherry answered.

Elspeth turned toward him. "You, Cherry, will

you not come too?" He shook his head, smiling in his mysterious way. "I'll not be far off," he answered.

Elspeth went on her way through the long, winding, closely packed streets by Netherly Port and found herself at last in a corner of the square, wedged in close to a cart full of cabbages. She caught the edge of the cart and scrambled up the side. The sleepy horse made no sign. Its driver had disappeared. Before Elspeth could get her breath someone grabbed and hugged her—and to her amazement the voice of Hood Boomer sounded in her ears. There she sat, fat and complacent, in her best white cambric frock, with her Stuart sash tied about her waist, her frilled, black silk bonnet in her lap, and a heavy braid bobbing on each side of her flushed face.

At any other time Elspeth would have shown her amazement at seeing Hood, but all her emotions now were centered on the fact that they were waiting for Prince Charlie. There was nothing else in the world for her but that. She hardly heard Hood's excited chatter. "Don't preach, Ellie, nor ask me how I came here. We're safe on the cart. We can see the Prince. I escaped from my stupid

family with little trouble. I made up my mind to see things for myself!"

Elspeth squeezed Hood's arm. They were out for adventure, both of them; they had run away from their ordered, sheltered homes. She was glad that Hood was with her there on the cabbage cart with throngs of excited people all about them, yokels, servants, soldiers, guardsmen, and here and there a wild dark face that showed Highland blood. They were waiting as were she and Hood, breathlessly, curiously, for the Prince. There was the skirling of bagpipes, the sound of distant drums.

Elspeth's heart beat as though it would burst. She caught snatches of words that passed like wildfire through the crowds. "Army around by Duddingston to avoid fire from castle, left of Arthur's Seat. Halted at Hunter's Bog on way to Salisbury Crags!"

Suddenly a mighty cheer seemed to swell from out the very heart of the city. Gradually it formed itself into words—"Prince Charlie! Charles Stuart! Charlie, Charlie, Charlie!" The sound deepened to a roar, and through it all sounded the skirl of bagpipes and the silver music of trumpets.

Somewhere afar off, or so it seemed to Elspeth, Hood was speaking, but what she said Elspeth did not know. She found herself standing high on the cart and although her voice sounded unreal she knew that she too was shouting, "Charlie, Charlie, Charlie!"

He came at last. A hush touched the clamor, a sudden silence that made the frenzied shouting which came afterwards seem a veritable avalanche of sound. He rode proudly, kindly, half sadly, and the sunshine helped to give him a royal welcome. It turned his hair to golden fire, making a shining background for a gallant figure.

"Long life to Charles Stuart!" was shouted up to him, and through all the din of pipes and drums, through all the clamor and excitement, through the music and the swaying and urging of the crowd, the cry of "Charles Stuart—Charlie, Charlie, Charlie!" seemed to mingle with the glad September wind and to become part of it.

Elspeth in the midst of the excitement that held her was grateful that the cart was so close to the portal, for she saw her Prince in all his youth and glory. She even thought she caught a fleeting smile

from his brown eyes. He was dressed in tartan with an embroidered waistcoat. He seemed all blue and gold to Elspeth's adoring eyes. The sun touched to brightness the blue sash wrought with gold which was flung across his shoulders, and made a dazzling shimmer of the chestnut gold hair that showed from beneath his gold-laced cap of green velvet. He passed them in a moment, sitting his horse as a Highlander should; and, except for the flash of his brown eyes, Elspeth's chief memory of him was the white cockade in the shape of Saint Andrew's cross on the front of his cap.

Women in the crowd were weeping as they waved their kerchiefs at him, and as he rode on to Holyrood Palace a mighty roar seemed to engulf him.

Hood shouted at the top of her lungs, but Elspeth stood silent; and it may be that in all the bewildering throng Charles Stuart noticed her, tense of face, hands clasped in front of her. After the Prince had passed by, Hood sat down in the cart, and drew forth a paper bag.

"Sit you down, Ellie, and eat one of Cook's excellent picklets. It will put fresh heart in you. Your

cheeks are like late wine apples. Come, sit here." Hood patted the rough, cabbage-strewn floor of the cart beside her. Elspeth sank down and accepted a picklet but did not eat it. She was looking off across the square, following with wistful eyes the crowd as it surged forward toward Holyrood.

"I gave three picklets to the cabbage woman for allowing me to sit here," Hood was saying to her. "There is naught like a freshly baked picklet for cheering one." Hood took a large mouthful of the crisp brown cake as she spoke. She had hugely enjoyed the excitement of the crowds and the cheers for the Prince, but now that it was over she was tired and—although she would not have admitted it—uneasy. They would be searching for her everywhere at home.

"Charlie, Charlie, Charlie!" The sound was farther away, but one heard it still. The gray city seemed to sing it, to shout it from the very hollows of its rocky base.

The cabbage woman, a stout, good-natured person in short gray skirts and a striped shawl, mounted the cart, surveyed the two girls, and smiled broadly. "A good day for us now Charlie's come. A brave

lad and bonny. I'm going toward the north gate and can take you a pace if you like," she said as she slapped the reins on the horse's back. The girls thanked her and assented, for it meant that they would be taken to the foot of the hill leading to Elspeth's uncle's house. Hood was too tired to find her way home alone, at the far end of the city. She knew that she could not get through the throngs of soldiers and people.

Elspeth sat forward in the cart, her legs dangling over the sides, one of Hood's picklets in her hand. The cart moved slowly forward, away from the crowd, jogging over the rough wooden blocks.

"Why did you come along, Hood? Your family will be alarmed about you, and I doubt whether there is any way of sending word to them tonight. The city will be a wild place," began Elspeth, but Hood interrupted her pettishly.

"Be quiet with your preaching, Ellie. What of yourself? I doubt not you will be well punished for this, but I"—Hood shrugged her plump shoulders—"I know well how to manage my family, and Grandmother will stand by me."

Elspeth smiled. "You shall spend the night with us. That will be a treat, will it not?" She put her arm around Hood's plump waist.

The cabbage woman turned and looked down at them. "Be ye bairns ready to get ye down?" she asked. Elspeth looked up and saw to her surprise that they were in the low lane at the foot of the hill. They both jumped off the cart, thanked the cabbage woman, and began to ascend the hill as quickly as they could. Hood chattered as they walked, but Elspeth seemed to float on air. She had seen Prince Charlie riding into Edinburgh—she had seen him and acclaimed him!

Dusk was falling fast and as she opened the garden gate Elspeth felt suddenly that they were just two naughty children creeping home. They crossed the garden softly, Hood's brown cloak with its fluted silk ruffles falling off her shoulders, her half-empty bag of picklets clasped in one hand, the other holding Elspeth's.

The door leading from the hall was open and Aunt Milly stood there, a green shawl about her shoulders. Almost before she knew what she was doing Elspeth flung her arms about her. "I saw

him, Aunt Milly dear. I saw the Prince—his face—his golden hair—oh, Aunt Milly!"

Miss Channing returned the embrace and as they went down the hall asked many questions in her quick way. "They are most dreadfully put about, Ellie. You may expect no sympathy from anyone but me. Your Aunt Joan is faint with anxiety for you and Glen. He has been gone all day." Miss Channing's tone was kind. She patted Hood's shoulder. Her really kind heart was touched by Elspeth's pale excited face.

Aunt Joan met them in the hall. She looked tall and white and very cold. Her eyes swept past Hood and rested on Elspeth. She put out a hand to stop the girl's sudden explanation.

"You will go at once to your room, Elspeth, and you will not leave it all day tomorrow. If you were but a few years younger you would be well whipped for this afternoon's disobedience and wanton thoughtlessness."

The drawing-room door opened and Evan Channing came out. He too was pale, and his appearance lacked some of its usual fastidious neatness. He had only just come in. There was a piece of folded

paper in his hand. The broken red seal fell from it to the ground. "This has just come," he said, speaking as it were to all of them. "It is a note from Glenfinnan." He opened the paper and read the words with a little catch in his voice.

Dear Father, I have gone to join Prince Charlie's army and I shall serve him until my death. My love and duty to you all.

GLENFINNAN.

Elspeth stood silent, her eyes on the floor. She had been humiliated by her aunt's words, but suddenly a sense of exultation came over her. She and Glenfinnan were not apart. She was not just a naughty child who was being punished for disobedience; she was a part of a great scheme. Glenfinnan had gone and some time a message would come for her.

She turned and walked slowly upstairs, leaving silence behind her.

CHAPTER IX

HOLYROOD PALACE, which had so often held dark tragedy, was ablaze with lights, and noisy with music. The old palace had not been so gay since the days when Mary Queen of Scots had held court there near two centuries before. Mary with her French voice and her French followers had brought lightness and mirth for a time into the grim grayness of Scotland.

Holyrood was alight. Prince Charlie had captured a city, and in his proud, careless triumph he was celebrating the event.

Glenfinnan had been doing sentry duty for an hour. The heavy musket and bayonet made his arms ache, but he scarcely heeded it. He was a part of all the light and wonder, the torches and music and enthusiasm. His heart beat high with love and loyalty for the young Prince who had come at last. Thoughts chased themselves through his mind as he paced with measured tread back and forth. Somewhere beyond the palace wall a voice cried, "Midnight and all's well," and at the same moment something small and brown appeared at the top of the wall and like a flash dropped down into the courtyard. Glenfinnan stared in astonishment as Cherry stood before him.

"It has struck the midnight hour and your sentry duty is over. Tomorrow night you will not be watching here. This merrymaking is madness, Glenfinnan! Hark you—Cape's army has landed at Dunkirk, and is advancing. That is known within the palace and all through the camps. We must all of us fly forward. List well, Glenfinnan—would you fight?"

Glenfinnan threw back his head. "Fight? Aye, Cherry, lad, but there is no chance. It is probable, as you know well, that I'll be doing sentry duty a

year from now. I'm but a lad and untrained, and they think little of me."

Cherry interrupted his words with a quick, scornful laugh. "You are always stupid, but you are brave enough. Listen well, you will be fighting at dawn tomorrow. This army will be gone, and this palace a place of shadows again, even as the sun rises on the morrow. There will be a rumor through this town that a force of Highland men are guarding it, but they will be gone, every man of them—every man, I tell you. They will be far off within an hour's time. Do you hear yonder music and the sound of laughter? It will be over in an hour. There is business ahead that has naught to do with laughter. I'll be off to Lord George Murray now with this same word. The Prince will know it ere a half hour is gone." Cherry turned away; then, as she disappeared, she flung a question at him. "Shall I say to Lord George: 'One of your new sentries would fight—a man of Loch Shiel—and you know that every sound heart may be needed'?"

"Aye, Cherry, say that to him. But for God's sake who are you?" Glenfinnan called after the vanishing figure, and it seemed as though he shouted

the words. His head hummed and his heart sounded like a cannon in his ears. He was to fight for Prince Charlie. His dearest wish was coming true. But who was this strange lad in brown who always appeared so suddenly and unexpectedly and who seemed to know all things—this pale, shy slip of a thing who could dare to give a message to Lord George Murray himself, who seemed to know all that would happen before it took place, who had no fear of palaces or princes, of generals or statesmen?

Glenfinnan walked across to the palace wall and looked down, and something in the sight below him made him close his eyes for a moment. He leaned there, both arms on the rugged stone. As far as he could see was fire, great scarlet flames leaping through the blue night, and the dark figures of Highland soldiers, their horses beside them, sleeping. Prince Charlie's men bivouacked. Suddenly as he stood there came a sound, the sudden booming of a cannon from the very castle walls themselves. Cherry's words, then, had been true. The sound was an alarm.

It was as though a lighted match had suddenly been thrown into an ant's hill. The whole sleeping

world outside became at once a seething, moving, noisy mass of scarlet-clad figures running and turning; wild Gaelic shouts mingled with the ecstatic skirl of the pipes, and over all sounded quick orders given in English, the clapping sound of hundreds of horses' hoofs, and always music, barbaric, fantastic, the shrill call of the pipes!

Suddenly Cherry was back at Glenfinnan's side, but he paid scant attention. For the moment he felt almost beside himself with the glory and the wonder of it all. Gray Edinburgh, that sleepy, matter-of-fact city so void of dreams—Edinburgh was waking! Now had come its time of peril and adventure, surrounded as it was by thousands of wild soldiers going forth to battle with a king's army.

Cherry thrust a paper into his hand. "Here are your orders to fight. Your horse is with mine. Come quickly, for I must leave you on the instant." They ran together across the great stone court, now alive with hundreds of horses and officers and the wailing of pipes. "Glen, I must away before the Prince starts forth at the head of the army. I will see you later on. If aught of ill befalls you I'll look well to the care of your cousin Elspeth. Now God guard

you!" Like a flying autumn leaf blown through a wood, Cherry was gone, but by Glenfinnan's side was his faithful Roderick and in his pocket were his fighting orders.

To Glenfinnan the next hour had that atmosphere of unreality about it which sometimes comes in dreams. He was not conscious of his body or of the horse beneath him. He did not even wonder how Cherry had brought Roderick from the stables of his home on the hill. But even in the midst of the ride through the sweet, frosty air, his plaid wrapped closely about him, through the clanking of swords, the muttered Gaelic, the leading music of the pipes across the mist, Glenfinnan thought of Elspeth. As they made their way across the soft bracken, horse close to horse, men shoulder to shoulder, he thought a little wistfully of them all at home. There was his father, always kind but never understanding, engrossed in the petty details of his business and daily life. His mother he loved deeply, for all her coldness to others and her stately holding back from others' lives; her all-absorbing love was for him and for golden-haired Charmaine. He thought, too, of Ellie, the shy young cousin who had come to live

with them nine years before—Ellie, marked for service.

Stars shimmered through the mist. Now and then a sudden fitful wind blew the gray veil sidewise, and he caught glimpses of dark, eager faces, of scarlet tunics and wind-blown plaids, of bare legs glistening with frost. It was an unusually cold night for September. Bits of talk reached Glenfinnan's ears. He listened eagerly. "The Prince is at the head of the second column." "The Camerons and Macdonalds are in dozens in the first line."

Presently the army slept, the English of the Highland army in tents hastily put up, the Highlanders on bundles of new-cut hay. When the march began again it was in full sunlight; and suddenly, unbelievably, they saw before them a darkly hovering shadow against the startling blue-gray of the sea, all across a great stubble field in full view, Cape's army awaiting them!

Glenfinnan slept heavily through the golden afternoon and the misty evening. In his dreams he seemed to be calling Elspeth. "Ellie, Ellie!" He saw the old schoolroom vividly—the ruddy fire in the grate, Cudsy's picklets on the table, the two

chests, the piper doll propped against the clock. Then suddenly a stretch of moor, a roaring sound, and again Elspeth was a part of his dream. He woke shouting her name.

A tall, grizzled Highlander was smiling kindly down at him. "Aye, laddie, ye are braw and young enough to dream of home and mother. List ye! It's just past midnight and the mist has fallen. The men sleep and our Prince lies in his plaidie in their midst. There's a morass between us and the enemy. Just now I heard that a messenger has come. It's an alarm. Hush!" A soldier touched the Highlander's arm and said something to him. The Highlander went on. "We advance at once. It seems there is a dry path through the morass. This messenger knows it. He goes ahead to guide all our army."

Glenfinnan stood up stiffly, a little confused from his dream and his sudden awakening. The stars shone softly overhead. There was frost in the air. Then he turned to the Highlander beside him. "Do you know who the messenger was?" he asked.

The Highlander answered him slowly. "Nay. It was but a lad. Such a pale, odd young lad in brown,

riding a good horse. 'Tis he will guide us through yon path. It's battle, lad, battle!"

An hour later, as they made slow progress through the darkness, Glenfinnan thought again of Elspeth, and of the lad in brown. "If aught befalls you, I'll have a care for Elspeth," the boy had said. Yet here he was at the head of a great army, leading them in safety and in secret to do battle with their enemy!

The mist lifted. Dawn touched the great plain where Cape's unsuspecting army was encamped. It turned the gray moonlight to rose and gold, and suddenly through the stillness and the beauty came the roar of an alarm. The English army! English bayonets glittered in the sun. Glenfinnan saw the Highlanders falling to their knees and he knelt with them for that instant of prayer. Then they rose as one man, drew their bonnets over their brows, and went forward.

Their onset was terrific. There was something hardly earthly in their fierce cries of loyalty for Charles Stuart. The Prince was leading the second line, his gold locks flying, his face exultant. Glenfinnan was close enough to him to hear the clank of

his sword and the sound of his voice raised high—a sweet voice, Scotch, with a faint foreign note. "I've thrown away the scabbard!" he cried once, excitedly, as they plunged forward.

The rest was like a confused dream to Glenfinnan—sweeps of cold air, the smell of burning gunpowder in his nostrils, the pressure of bodies, the roar of guns, the pounding of hundreds of horses' hoofs. It was unearthly—the splendor of the dawn-touched moor, the wild Highland cries, and in the early sunlight the flashing of myriads of bayonets. But suddenly he was aware that the hoof-beats were fainter, that the flashing bayonets were moving away—the English were in retreat, their army was vanquished!

Someone near him was bending over a wounded English soldier and holding a flask to his lips. Someone was speaking to the bewildered Glenfinnan. "Take his head, laddie." Then, to the dying soldier, "There, there, man. Hold hard!"

An eagle-like head was lifted, and Glenfinnan started, for he saw that it was Prince Charlie himself who was ministering to the wounded man. The sunlight danced before Glenfinnan's eyes, and he

trembled a little as he knelt on the frosty ground, looking up at his hero. He saw the Prince's eyes soften, and he heard him say, "You are but a bairn. How comes it that you are here?" and Glenfinnan found himself answering eagerly, the words tumbling over each other.

"I am Glenfinnan Channing, and I am marked for your service. I have a cousin, too, a lass of sixteen, a sweet girl living in my father's house. Both of us are marked for your service. She is ready to give her life if that will help. I would have your Royal Highness know with what joy she awaits her time!"

Charles Stuart looked deep into Glenfinnan's eyes. There were tears in his own, and for a moment he could not speak. Then, as a rough Highlander came up with a stretcher for the wounded man, the Prince said, "Not in any kingdom nor in any time have I heard the like. A lad and a lass—a lass, God guard her!"

It was over an instant afterwards. The Prince was giving orders in a ringing voice. Glenfinnan was aware of sounding trumpets, of the strange exultancy of the pipes, of voices shouting, of the smell of

powder and of freshly brewed tea and frying bacon. Voices, harsh in the sweet morning light, mingled with groans from the wounded.

It was an hour later before Glenfinnan had his breakfast. He had helped to carry rude litters. He had sickened at the sight of wounds. He had seen a valiant Prince as tender as a mother to his wounded enemy. As Glenfinnan drank his tea and ate a slice of bread, he found himself next to the Highlander who had awakened him, and who said his name was Max.

"Colonel Gardiner was killed by a scythe. They do say eight hundred regulars, or thereabouts, went down. The dragoons who escaped switched to Berwick. The army vanished like rowan berries in a wind. We've lost a bare one hundred men. The Prince is fair mad for tending the English in their misery. He's little sense to waste his time on them. List well—he has paroled the enemy officers, and I'd not trust them as far as a baby crow can fly! We march back to Edinburgh town within the hour. There will be a wild time tonight and all the night at Holyrood. List to the bugles. We march back as we came. Who was it, I've a mind to know—what

canny bairn in brown was that who led us through to victory?"

All the long, triumphant way back to town, Glenfinnan wondered the same thing. Who was this boy who had led them through? What magic was his? Could anyone of them have done it? Whatever might befall, could anyone better serve a Prince than Cherry had?

CHAPTER X

THEN followed six weeks of feasting and music, of color and laughter, of young girls brought forward by eager mothers to make their adoring curtseys before their Prince. Holyrood was all asparkle, ablaze at night with myriads of rushlights and candles.

But the mornings were as gray as the nights were golden, for the mornings held gloomy counsel and warnings. England must be won over for Scotland. Even though every Scot were ready to face the foe with lifted bayonet, the Scotch could not stand against an empire. England was so near, so perilously near; harsh, wild Scottish moors melted into softer Yorkshire downs, and beyond them the great North Road, that scene of countless battles since the Roman days, led straight to London.

London! That was the word on Prince Charlie's lips and the last thought that held him as he fell asleep in the dim old castle where his ancestors had dreamed and suffered. Lancashire and Cheshire must be won, too; these were the two northern English

counties most favorable to his cause. Soon his decision was made: some of the army was left in Scotland, but eight thousand men would march out of Edinburgh on the wild chance of gaining English friends, on the wild venture of marching toward London.

The sixth week was coming to a close. The last ball had blazed itself out at Holyrood. The momentary gayety of the city had quickly died, and now there was a veil of depression over everything. Those who had most dreaded the Prince's coming had grown to hate him fiercely. Rich merchants found their purses lighter, for the whole fantastic proceeding had had a disastrous effect on banking and commerce. Honest middle-class folk were frightened by the wild Highland soldiers, half-ragged and unquestionably hungry, who appeared suddenly at their doorways with pointed pistol, demanding a bite. The plain, practical people of Edinburgh did not want glory and excitement; they were content with their drab ways.

Elspeth lived through the last days of Prince Charlie's occupation of her beloved city as in a dream. She was so restless that it seemed at times as

though the quiet grayness of her uncle's home on the hill would smother her. Twice she had slipped out alone and found her way to Holyrood, hoping vaguely for a sight of Glenfinnan, but she was disappointed both times. All she saw were the fierce-looking sentries at the gates, who did not answer when she spoke to them.

It seemed to her that she could not bear to let the army go! "They do belong. They're a part of it all," she thought as from the hawthorn tree she watched the flare of the crimson watch fires. She said this to Lady McAllister one evening, and was answered, "They must make themselves the *whole* of it, Ellie!"

They stood by the window in Lady McAllister's gracious drawing-room, looking down at the candle-lit cottages and hovels below.

"Tomorrow the Prince leaves us—he and so many of his men," Lady McAllister spoke sadly.

Elspeth looked up at her eagerly, tears in her eyes. "Does it mean the end, do you think, Madam? Tell me that you are sure they will come back!" There was pleading in Elspeth's voice. Her friend looked down at her, smiling kindly. Elspeth seemed such a

child, in her straight white frock and rose-colored sash, her hair falling in a straight mass below her waist. She had had her wish at last, and had come alone for supper with Lady McAllister. A servant would come for her at nine. They had had a dainty supper—just the two of them; breaded scallops, a roasted fowl, jellies, and coffee in small red-and-gold cups. Now they had come back to the fire, drawing their chairs close to the cheerful blaze.

Lady McAllister looked fondly at Elspeth. She was a widow and childless. Her beauty and her witty conversation had made her a valuable friend of the Prince and his followers. She was whole-heartedly with Prince Charlie in his wild undertaking, and she knew that if the worst should befall him, if he should be obliged to flee to the moors and hide for his life, her own lovely moorland house, "Rick Grange," would be an admirable center from which she could help him to shield those of his scouts who might come that way, to take messages, in short to be on guard where she would be most needed.

She loved Elspeth's devotion to the Stuart cause, her fancies and dreams and odd, childish plans. Sometimes she watched her curiously, wondering

what was back of some of Elspeth's sayings. "It is as though there is nothing the child would not dare," she often thought, but never once did she dream that her young friend, like herself, was already one of the huge phalanx of those whose devotion surrounded the Prince.

Elspeth, sitting before the fire in this intimate hour with her friend, was happier than she had been for days. Her heart was warmed and touched. Something she had always missed, something just out of reach, seemed to come close to her and enfold her. This motherly interest and love and companionship seemed to her suddenly very wonderful. They talked mostly of the Prince, of the wonderful weeks that had just gone by, of the peril that lay ahead.

"He has captured so many with his charm and his smile. He is so confident, poor laddie, and so blind to the bleak patch ahead of him," Lady McAllister was saying.

Suddenly, as Elspeth looked up at her from the low stool, where she sat, she felt an overwhelming wish to tell her friend of what was always in her mind—the shadow touched with fire, the great secret that she was marked for service. The words

trembled on her lips, but she kept them back. She was pledged to secrecy. It might be that her time would never come. The old man with the pipe, the small dark girl, all of the scenes that afternoon when Glenfinnan had taken her to the hovel, seemed like a grotesque dream as the days slipped by, filled with simple interests—dame school, and tea with her aunts in the drawing-room; while outside a whole city was filled with soldiers, and Prince Charlie was in Holyrood. Glenfinnan had come back safely with a victorious army from Gladsmir. They had not seen him, but they knew that he was one of the army that would march forth the next day. Elspeth clasped her hands tightly in her effort not to tell her secret.

The merry, kindly voice questioned her, "What is it, Ellie? What would you say? Is it that you would like to meet the Prince yourself, some day? That, I promise you, shall come to pass when he comes gloriously home again!" She touched Elspeth's cheek with a tender hand.

Suddenly, through the quiet ticking of the great clock on the marble mantelpiece and the crackling of the fire, came a strange sound. It seemed just outside the windowpane and it sounded like the faint cry

of a night owl. They both listened, and as it was repeated Elspeth rose to her feet. "There is something at the window," she faltered, and her friend saw that she was trembling.

"Well, well, child, it is naught to frighten you." As she spoke Lady McAllister went over to the window, drew aside the curtain, and looked out. Something small and dark hovered just outside. She opened the window, and with the rush of the night air there came again the unmistakable cry of a night owl. Cherry stepped inside. She wore her small brown cap and was spurred and booted. She made a quick bow to Lady McAllister, who had stepped back, her hand at her heart, but Cherry looked directly at Elspeth.

"Come at once. Your hour is here. I have a heavy cloak for you, and a horse."

Lady McAllister spoke quickly. "I know that you are Cherry. There is not one of us who does not honor you. But what madness do you speak to this child? Where would you take her."

Before Cherry could answer, Elspeth spoke. "I am marked for service. I have pledged my word. My hour is here." Suddenly something of the quick

wild inspiration which had touched her in the hovel came over her, and her eyes shone.

Lady McAllister's face had paled until it matched the delicate lace of her red velvet gown. "Ellie, you shall not go. You cannot leave my house in the dark alone to go God knows where. I forbid you to go!" she commanded.

Elspeth put both her arms around the friend she so dearly loved and hid her face for a moment on her shoulder. It was as though she were saying goodbye to so much that she had just begun to appreciate —firelight and safety and understanding and love. "I must go," she whispered, and then she turned and, going toward Cherry, who stood silently by the open window, said quietly, "I am ready."

"I forbid you to go. Do you wish my anger, Elspeth? You are a reckless, disobedient girl. You must not disobey me. You will be well punished if you do." The stern voice reached Elspeth's ears as the cold wind swept about her. She would have turned back to plead for the loving goodbye for which she so longed, but a mighty blast of wind banged the window shut, and like a flash Cherry threw the cloak about her and dragged her down

from the steps to the steep terrace of the garden. For an instant they saw Lady McAllister watching by the window, but they did not wait for more. They ran, hand in hand, the wind whirling about them, the cold air taking away their breath. Elspeth was sobbing softly as she ran. Where were they going? What did it mean? She could only run blindly with Cherry. Suddenly they stopped. Cherry said something to two sentries on duty at a high portal; it opened, and they went in.

The large, brightly lighted room which welcomed them dazed Elspeth for a moment. She put her hand to her eyes. Cherry hurried her across the room, whose fireplace held burning logs. There were soldiers about. She saw their kilts swinging past her, and from somewhere beyond came the sound of rough voices and laughter. The girls went on through a doorway into another room—this one so small as to be scarcely more than a cupboard, and lighted by a single candle. Here, a heap of clothes lay across the table.

"Put these on at once, Elspeth. When you are dressed I will talk with you. Now I must deliver a message, but I'll return ere you have done." Els-

peth turned toward her. She was trembling from excitement and the cold. "Shall I not cut my hair?" she asked.

Cherry smiled. "Nay, you are not to wear a lad's apparel, but sensible, warm riding clothes. Tuck your hair under the cape of your coat. I'll be with you anon." As she finished speaking, Cherry went on into the room beyond.

Elspeth was seized with a wild longing to leave it all, to rush out through the fire-lit room and into the chill night again, to the warm shelter of Lady McAllister's arms, then on to her own room at home. There she would find fire light dancing on the walls—toffy—chattering—fun—safety! Tears filled her eyes and rolled down her cheeks, and she sobbed. But even as the thought of home tempted her, she was quickly changing into the tunic and blouse, the warm stockings and thick shoes. Then she put her cloak on, pushed her thick hair under the cape and pulled on a small, dark cap. She had just finished as Cherry returned.

"Listen, lass," Cherry said at once. "It is well that you are ready, for haste is needed. There is only one danger for you, but it is a real one—Lady

McAllister. You may be sure that she has lost no time in giving an alarm. She will have sent a servant posthaste to your uncle, and there will be a search. You must be safe beyond the town and well away ere midnight."

"Where is it that I go? Whatever I do, will you be with me, Cherry?" It seemed to Elspeth as she waited for Cherry's answer that the beating of her heart would choke her.

Cherry spoke gently. "That cannot be, lass. Our paths are apart. You are going to a place which God send I shall see again. I go with you now only as far as one of the outer moors."

Elspeth interrupted Cherry, seizing her arm and looking up at her with wide-open, startled eyes. "Do not leave me, Cherry! Let us go together."

Cherry laughed softly. "Do you not see that I am only a lass like yourself, Elspeth? I wear these lad's clothes only for protection. Come, remember your trust. You are going to Thistle Inn. It is my home and the home of my ancestors. It lies deep in sheltered moorlands." Then she hesitated a moment. "It may be," she said slowly, "it may be that the Prince will find his way there, one day."

Before Elspeth could answer Cherry caught her arm and ran with her across the room. A moment later they had mounted their horses standing by the portal, and were galloping through the night. As they rode away and the wind whistled by them, Elspeth's heart thrilled and yearned, for looking back she saw that it was Holyrood that they had left, black against the starlit skies. Glenfinnan was there keeping guard, and she had not seen him. Her eager young spirit wafted him a goodbye as she sped on with Cherry by her side, into the mystery of the night.

CHAPTER XI

"FARE you well, Elspeth. You have been a brave lass and have kept back the wish to know where you go and what it is that awaits you." Cherry leaned forward and her soft laugh rang out in the clear air. It was so sweet that it made a strange contrast to the tragic stillness of the night. "I am only Cherry, my grandfather's pet for the moment, Elspeth. You are going to him and you have naught to fear." Cherry caught both of Elspeth's hands as they rode side by side. Her face shone white in the starlight. "I cannot always promise you that there

will be no danger for you, Elspeth, but for some days I think you will find only peace in our moorlands. Ho, Starf!" She raised her voice as the sound of hoofs on soft bracken reached them.

"Ho, Cherry!" came back the answer, and the next moment Starf rode up to them.

A few minutes later they watched Cherry's light form vanish into the night, her faithful steed carrying her back to Edinburgh, and they themselves—Elspeth and the wild-looking boy beside her—turned their horses toward the bleak and hidden moorlands of Highland Scotland.

It seemed to Elspeth that they had ridden for weeks instead of hours, the whistling wind in their ears and the breathless sweetness of the moor air in their faces, when suddenly the boy drew rein, and turning in his saddle, his dark locks falling across his red cape, spoke.

"It is time that you ate and rested, lass. I'll swear you are asleep most nights in your own bed, at this hour." Starf smiled at Elspeth, his dark eyes kindly as he spoke, and she felt at once a great liking for him, and a sense of comfort.

She looked back a little fearfully over her shoul-

der. "Do we do well to linger here? They might make a search for me," she said, and she tried to stifle the sudden uncontrollable, illogical wish that came over her, that they *would* find her and bring her back!

"Nay, there is no danger. We are beyond the point where we would be followed. We are safe in our own confines. Come, I will take your bridle for a bit; there is rough ground just here, and a hill and a hollow and then another hill, a rocky one. It is there that we shall find shelter." Starf jumped from his horse and caught the bridle of Elspeth's horse and very slowly they descended into darkness, stones rolling away from their horses' hoofs.

The moorland sloped away above them, and higher still the stars blazed, sparks of red, yellow, and silver. The horses' legs trembled from their difficult descent. Starf breathed heavily for a moment. It had taken all his strength to aid the horses. The rest of the way was less difficult. Elspeth dismounted and climbed the rocky path with Starf giving her a helping hand now and then. They reached the top at last—rocky caverns all about them, stretching beyond them, endless moorlands which

seemed to melt into the starlit horizon and to breathe of mystery.

Starf tethered the horses to the jagged corner of a great rock. Then he took a heavy mantle from off his saddle, and throwing it over his shoulder held out a hand to Elspeth. "Come, lass, there is shelter here where you can rest," and he led her high up on the rock to the mouth of a sort of cave. Starf put the heavy soft rug down, half inside the cave. "Get you there and rest. There is food here and mayhap you can sleep."

Elspeth was too exhausted to do more than sink down on the rug. Her legs and arms ached and felt heavy. In spite of excitement she fell asleep at once.

She was awakened by the crackling of a fire. Starf was cooking meat at the end of a stick. The light from the flames touched his dark face, turning to bronze his red doublet and cape. Elspeth stood up stiffly and went over to the fire. Starf greeted her with a smile.

"This bit of meat will do you well after your sleep, lass. See, we can use this flat bit of rock as a table and we'll have our supper ere we travel on."

He spoke as though it were the most natural thing in the world for them to be eating there in the starlight at the top of a rock.

"This isn't strange to you, but it is to me—very, very strange," Elspeth exclaimed impulsively as she took a bite of meat between two cold bannocks and a sip of spiced wine from a silver cup. Starf had heated the wine from a flagon which he had taken with the bits of raw meat from a wallet across his shoulder. He laughed at Elspeth's words and answered eagerly.

"It is the way I like. I am always out sleeping and eating under the stars, or riding when the dawn breaks." He hesitated a moment. "I hide when the moon is high. It is all the life I know. I am Sir Roderick's grandson. I have never been beyond our Highlands." Starf spoke easily, gayly. Elspeth felt at ease with him. He was not afraid of words or speech. He was just himself, a Highland boy, part of the wild wonderland. A sudden great liking for him touched Elspeth. Some of the sense of danger and uncertainty left her.

The meat and wine revived her. She found herself talking easily to Starf; found something oddly

attractive about him. And as they sat there on the rock by the dying fire, she learned things that amazed her. She could scarcely believe her ears when Starf said, "Sir Max, your great-grandfather, was the greatest of huntsmen in all the glens. They still sing of him at night around the fires."

Her great-grandfather! Starf knew all about her. He knew—this strange boy whom twenty-four hours before she had never seen—more about the wonderful weaving of the lives that had come before her, and that so closely touched her, than she knew herself. In spite of cold and fatigue, of dread of what lay before her, of homesickness and fear, she listened eagerly to all that he said.

He told her of his childhood days among the glens. Sitting cross-legged, pausing now and then to take a bite of bannock and bacon, he talked; and as they sat there by the leaping flames Elspeth found herself talking too. It was the first time in her life that she had ever been with one who spoke so spontaneously, who had no reserve, no self-consciousness; someone who seemed a part of the wildness of the glens and heather. Unlike Glenfinnan, he talked easily, readily, and Elspeth knew that he did her

great honor in much that he said. She knew that had she not pledged herself to the cause of the Prince, Starf would not be speaking so freely.

"We've always loved Prince Charlie, Cherry and I. Why, when we were wee bairns we often had news of him, for our grandfather, Sir Hugh Roderick, would many a time have a message through from Italy. Then there would be a gathering of the clans at night around the fire, with counsels and plannings." Starf threw back his head and laughed joyously. "Now it is all coming true. It is like a great wonder, all this—armies and secrets and rejoicings! Why, you yourself lass," he turned his graceful head toward her as he went on speaking, "you are a part of the wonder."

The tears that had been welling in Elspeth's eyes rolled down her cheeks. She tried to speak, and could only smile.

Starf nodded. "You are tired with all this strangeness. Some day when all this is better known to you, mayhap you will tell me of your uncle's house and how your life has been, and of your cousin Glenfinnan, who is so young to be a soldier." He began

to gather things together, putting the flask and cups and the rest of the meat back into the wallet. "How do you know all this about me, Starf?" she asked.

He turned, smiling, the rug across his shoulder. "Why, Cherry told me all she knows, though that isn't very much," he answered.

Elspeth clasped her hands about her knees, silent with astonishment, thinking of what Cherry had told her. Here was another girl who would dare and do, a braver, wiser girl than she. Then another thought came to her—the hovel, the smoke, a small girl with dark eyes.

"I saw Cherry then, did I not, in a hovel where my cousin took me and where an old man sat smoking. There have been times when I've seen Cherry since that. I've always felt that there was something like the girl in the hovel in her, but I really never knew. Isn't it wonderful, Starf?" she spoke dreamily, looking off at the moors.

She hoped, as Starf gave her one of his fleeting smiles, that they had somehow formed a friendship there on the rocks by the little fire. She knew she

wanted his friendship deeply, but she also knew that in spite of his charming air of kindness, it would not be an easy thing to win.

The darkness lifted suddenly. A sweep of green-blue light touched the horizon, and spread the length of the sky. The stars paled rapidly. There was something almost mysterious about the scene. Stretches of the gold and bronze of faded bracken gorse and heather—here and there the dark green sweep of lowlands—the silver flash of waterfalls—and everywhere the secret moorlands. Elspeth stood up, breathless with the loveliness around her. Turning to Starf she thought that he too was touched by the wonder of it all. Her dark face was upraised for a moment.

They rode swiftly, the chill, sweet wind in their faces and the fearsome wonder of the dawn across wild wastelands all about them.

They stopped at noon for rest and food. Then on again, slowly, cautiously now, Starf often leading Elspeth's horse down steep hills, through rocky caverns, across hidden green valleys, by thundering opalescent waterfalls. Then moors again, and finally a great stretch of rock in front of them, towering

above them, frowning down on them—the outposts of Thistle Inn.

The rest was like a half-waking dream to Elspeth. Her fatigue was so great that her head swam as Starf helped her off her horse. She would have fallen if Starf and a serving man (who had been watching for them on the rocks) had not rushed to her, supporting her up the craggy granite sides of the great pile, then down again to the grim, grated door of the Inn. The rest was a confusion of light, color and sound—dogs barking, torches flaring, people calling—strange voices and wild strange faces everywhere. Somebody offered her hot food and wine, which she was too tired to take. Then Cherry's own bed, firm and small, with a thick fur cover; and the wind-swept scent of heather wafted to her through the open casement. Then suddenly, or so it seemed to her, morning—a glad golden morning, with voices again and dogs barking and the sudden overwhelming realization that she was far, far away from everyone and everything that she had ever known, hidden deeply in an unknown cavern in the Highlands, among strangers whose language she scarcely understood, in the heart of a network of wild

valleys and streams, moors and hills. There she was, to help a cause for which she was to give her wits, her young strength, and, if necessary, her life, at any moment.

CHAPTER XII

CHARMAINE was writing in her diary. Her fingers trembled and twice she put down the quill pen. Then, laying her head down on the schoolroom table, she burst into a storm of tears. Bumble glanced up lazily from his comfortable corner by the fire, yawned, rose reluctantly, and, springing up to the table beside her, licked her ear, purring vigorously. She put one arm around him, her sobs lessening. "How she loved you, Bumble! Do you remember how she called you Goldy-pet and Fat Paw? It was only yesterday that she was here in this very room. I can see her this minute, frowning on the copy Miss MacMasters had her do as a punishment for Friday. Where is she now, Bumble? Where is she?"

Bumble bumped his head sympathetically against Charmaine's arm, and gazed at her inquiringly, still purring. Then he settled himself on a fat Latin grammar and dozed off again. Charmaine dried her eyes, picked up her pen, and began again on her diary, still sobbing softly.

Hood and I put the toffy to cool by the casement. It was after ten. We were wondering why Ellie did not come. Then we heard a horse galloping, and the sound of the door opening, and voices—a groom's, then Father's; then the servants running. We wrapped ourselves in blankets and listened at the window. Father was outside. We could see him plainly. He ran around the side of the house toward the stable but came back almost at once and went inside. Then a porte chaise drew up and someone wrapped in red velvet alighted. We knew at once that it was Lady McAllister. She ran inside the opened door. There were more voices. Hood and I could no longer be patient. We dressed quickly and ran downstairs. No one noticed us. We stood in the large hall where all the servants seemed to be running about. Mother and Lady McAllister and Aunt Milly were in the drawing-room. Lady McAllister looked fairly ghostly. She was white and her eyes so dark and wild.

Charmaine's eyes were overflowing, and the tears splashed down on the sheet. She was tired from the late hours of the night before and from the excite-

ment which had so shaken the whole household since the moment of the arrival of a breathless messenger from Lady McAllister with the amazing news of Elspeth's having been spirited away from the house in the very presence of Her Ladyship.

The schoolroom door opened suddenly and Hood Boomer came in. She was eating a large red apple, and, seeing Charmaine in tears, went on eating as she silently crossed the room. Hood was not feeling at all like herself. The day was gray and listless after the high storm of the night before. All through the morning hours and into the middle of the afternoon came the faint farewell of bagpipes, the triumphant melody of fife and drum, as Prince Charlie and his eight thousand men marched away. They had been marching since dawn, and midnight would find them still going southward.

Hood was tired and homesick, but most of all she was bored. There was always diversion of some kind in the Boomer household. One could pick a quarrel with another of the schoolroom group if nothing more interesting happened, but here, in this grave, charming mansion, all was gloom. The excitement over the news of Elspeth's disappearance

had been intense. Hood and Charmaine had sat huddled together in blankets at the foot of their bed, talking, exclaiming, and surmising until dawn, but breakfast had been as solemn and conventional as ever. Mrs. Channing had poured the tea with an unmoved countenance. She had reprimanded Charmaine because she slouched in her chair and spilled the currant jam.

Then Hood decided to talk. "No word was said about Ellie at breakfast, yet one could see that your mother had not slept, and that Miss Milly Channing had been weeping. I thought today would be a day of fun and talking, but instead, it's a glum, dull day. We sit here and do nothing. Your mother has even forbidden us to go into the garden." Hood leaned her chin on her plump hand, and took a last bite of the almost demolished apple. "Charmaine," she went on, "let us have adventures, too. Let us," she hesitated, a dimple appearing in her fat red cheeks, "let us go out of the garden door, the two of us alone. There is no one about. Your mother and aunt are with Lady McAllister. Your father is gone in search of Ellie. I will take care of you, Charmaine, for have I not been out alone in the city,

and from the top of a cabbage cart seen our Prince Charlie enter the city?" Hood jumped off the table, throwing her arms around her friend.

Charmaine returned the hug, but looked at Hood in amazement, drawing her fair brows together in a puzzled frown. "Go out of the garden door into the city, we two alone, this dreary afternoon? What madness do you speak, Hood? What would be the point? Where would we go, pray, and what would we do? We should find mother and Aunt Milly at Lady McAllister's, and we should be well punished for our boldness in going there alone. We cannot go to your home, because of the twins' malady. Whatever would we do?" As she finished speaking Charmaine raised her tear-drenched face to Hood innocently. Hood returned the gaze somberly and did not reply. Charmaine did not understand; she never would understand.

Hood went over to the window and looked out. Her cheeks blazed and tears of anger stood in her eyes. What a stupid place it was, this gray, cold Channing house, now that dear Ellie was gone! Yesterday it had been a house of delight, each hour bringing a new interest, in spite of lessons and Mrs.

Channing's stateliness. Ellie had been with her, darling Ellie, her best friend. What fun they had had yesterday morning, up in the dingy attic, she and Ellie, looking through an old trunk full of dresses and shawls once worn by Ellie's grandmother! What looks and smiles they had given each other during lunch in the chilly dining room as they ate their cold mutton and hot potato! They had admired Ellie as she had stood by the fire in the drawing-room before going to supper with Lady McAllister. Her uncle, Mr. Evan Channing, had been there and had spoken kindly to them all. How white and tired he had looked, worried as he was with having his young son in the Highland army and his business in confusion.

Hood stood near the side window, frowning out at the garden. There was the hawthorn tree where Ellie had perched so often, dreaming of the Prince and of his coming. Now, that very morning, Prince Charlie at the head of his army had left Edinburgh on the wildest, maddest escapade the world had ever known. Something of the realization of this touched Hood as she stood looking out at the gray November day.

"The city is draft—the whole of this part of the world's gone mad!" Mr. Channing had said in the drawing-room the evening before. He himself had escorted Ellie to Lady McAllister although he did not really approve. "The woman's daft! She is one of those who would aid this will-o'-the-wisp Prince in his madness," he had exclaimed.

Lady McAllister! How white she had looked standing there in the firelight. How exciting it had all been last night. Mrs. Channing and her sister had scarcely noticed her and Charmaine as they had stood there in the drawing-room, an anxious, excited group. Today was quiet and dismal. She and Charmaine were told not to go into the garden. The ladies were in close, serious consultation in the garden. Mr. Evan Channing had ridden away at midnight and many of his friends had gone with him. The glamour and thrill of having an army camped at the foot of one's home would soon be over, for all day long the soldiers were riding out of the city toward the great North Road and England.

There was a light rap on the door; it opened, and Glenfinnan came into the schoolroom. Charmaine sprang to her feet with a cry and running across the

room threw herself into his arms and burst into tears. Glenfinnan stroked her head gently, an unusual caress from him. Then with his arm about her, they crossed the room. Hood blushed with delight as Glenfinnan stooped and kissed her cheek.

"You are a good, sensible lass, Hood. I will see to it that you have a reward some day," he said.

Charmaine looked at them curiously. Hood gave Glenfinnan a meaning glance, the color deepening in her round cheeks. She knew that he meant he was well pleased with the trust he had placed in her when he had asked her not to speak of having found Cherry there by the window grating in the Boomers' house the night of the schoolroom party. She had known how to keep a secret.

"Glen, Glen, it is really you! What a surprise! We thought you were going away without a word to us. It was breaking Mother's heart. Tell me, Glen, do you really march away today?" Charmaine's tear-drenched blue eyes gazed up at her brother, who patted her shoulder, smiling kindly down at her. He seemed much older and more experienced than the Glen she had always known, although he had been away from them all for only a few weeks.

"Yes, I march within the hour. I've not a moment to spare here, but could not leave without a goodbye to Mother and you all," he answered.

The opening of the schoolroom door interrupted Glenfinnan's last words. Mrs. Channing came into the room, followed by her sister. She wore a heavy blue crêpe shawl about her shoulders, and her face looked white and drawn. Miss Milly Channing had been weeping. Glenfinnan's mother came swiftly toward him. He met her halfway across the room and, putting both arms about her, laid his head for a moment on her shoulder. "It is goodbye for the present, Mother. I couldn't leave without seeing you, but I have to report to my commanding officer within the half hour. Roderick is tethered at the portal this very moment, so I must be off and away." He still stood with his arms about her as she answered him with a question.

"Elspeth—where is she?"

The color rushed to Glenfinnan's face. He answered slowly, "I do not know where she is, but I do know that she is safe and that she is the bravest lass in all of Scotland. She has been marked for service these many weeks. Last night her call came.

Please God her work is for a victorious cause! But in any event," he looked wistfully across his mother's shoulders at his aunt and the girls, "we are joyful that we can serve Prince Charlie!"

There was something exultant and far removed from them all about him. He held his mother closely, his cheek against hers. Then, loosening her hold, he turned to Charmaine and Hood, kissed them and his aunt, and was gone out of the room before they could speak.

His mother cried after him, running across the room, her gray silken gown trailing behind her. There was something awful in the cry. It frightened the two girls. They clung together by the schoolroom table. Miss Milly Channing was crying, words coming disjointedly between her sobs. "Madness, madness, and all because of yellow hair and folderols, and now he may be killed and Ellie gone and no one knows where!"

Charmaine and Hood ran over to the window. They saw Glenfinnan mounting his horse outside the portal at the end of the garden. They knew that his mother had been too late to reach him, for they

heard her voice in the garden calling his name despairingly, "Glen, Glen, Glen!"

The two girls leaned forward watching breathlessly as Glenfinnan rode away. The only sounds they heard were the listless sighing of the wind in the trees, the clatter of Roderick's hoofs, and the voice of Glenfinnan's mother calling him from the garden.

Glenfinnan rode swiftly, pulling Roderick up shortly in front of the great open gate of Lady McAllister's mansion. He leaned forward to speak to Lady McAllister, who had evidently been waiting for him, and who came up swiftly to his horse's side.

"Your pardon, Madam—I have but a second, for we ride away within the half hour. I have a message from Cherry for you. He could not reach you." Glenfinnan smiled suddenly through his gravity, admiration in his eyes. "He is the will-o'-the-wisp of the army, with the work of thousands upon his shoulders. He wishes me to tell you that you will be called upon soon; not today nor tomorrow, but very soon; and that you will probably be sent to your own place in the Highlands, Rick Grange."

Lady McAllister repeated the words after Glenfinnan, then she went on, speaking quickly. "Tell me, where is Ellie? You can never know the night I've spent! What madness is this—a child, a girl spirited away in the night? This is no battle for children. What madness! Tell me—" Her dark eyes followed Glenfinnan. Drawing her cloak about her to keep out the chill November wind, she repeated, "Tell me, where is Ellie?"

Glenfinnan answered her at once, frankly. "I do not know and I could not tell you if I did. Each one of us has his service to do and we dare not question. You yourself, Madam, will have work to do. Be ready. Goodbye!" And before Lady McAllister could hold him or question him, he had galloped on toward Netherly Port to join his regiment.

Lady McAllister watched as he and Roderick disappeared, seeming to melt into the blue-gray mistiness of the cavern-like city. She wished him Godspeed deep in her heart, for he, too, was scarcely more than a child. What wonder was this, that these young creatures could go forward, off alone into the night, unafraid? She walked slowly up the steps of her house, her head bowed a little, foreboding heavy

upon her. Like Elspeth she realized that reality had come, and the dancing and the brilliant doings at the palace and in some of the great houses in Edinburgh were over. The time for clever conversation and diplomacy had gone by. She, herself, might at any moment go out into the night, alone.

CHAPTER XIII

"I KEN there'll be na more o' this for long." Max's voice sounded close to Glenfinnan's ears. The sharp winter wind, bringing with it the piny sweetness of a wet forest, shrieked about them. Listless snowflakes melted on the plaids across their shoulders. They were making their way through a clearing where the brush and undergrowth were not so dense, pushing branches and heavy, low-hanging boughs away from them as they walked.

Glenfinnan answered him after a moment. "No, Max, it cannot be like this for long." His voice was sharp and clear-cut in the silvery twilight. His face as they emerged from the dense wood showed white

and small beside Max's ruddy countenance. A red light shone through a blur of blue-black forest beyond them, and they made toward it, walking quickly.

"Ye would have thought it the grand time o' your life, lad, a few weeks back, to be chosen as one to guard Prince Charlie here in the lodge of the forest of Cadzon, but I ken there's little heart in ye tonight," muttered Max, as they took a winding path leading directly toward a long, low building of gray stone set in a clearing.

Glenfinnan turned toward Max, eagerly answering. "I find it the grand time of my life, as you say, Max. It is the highest honor I shall ever know." His words came more slowly as he went on speaking, for he was trying with all his might to keep his voice from choking. Hot tears stood in his eyes but he forced them back. Glenfinnan's heart was heavier than the musket he had carried during the long, weary days of marching into England. He was very tired, and for the first time since his call had come he realized that he was very, very young.

Max grunted half to himself, an anxious eye on his young friend. He had taken pains to keep near him on the long marches and to stand between him

and some of the rougher elements in the Highland army. Every day there were deserters—hungry, dissatisfied men tired of the dreary life and of the small, uncertain pay, men without spirit enough to care greatly for Prince Charlie and his cause, or to risk their chance of a livelihood for it. Max knew deep in his faithful heart that there were some who would stand staunchly by until the end, whenever or whatever that might be, but he knew, too, that once again on Scottish shores—as now they were—every day would find their ranks lessening and their danger more immediate.

Carlisle had fallen easily into their hands after they crossed the border into England, but Lancashire had been apathetic, and had supplied them with only three hundred men. Then Cheshire and Wales had been indifferent. And somehow an unspoken word had crept into the hearts of the ragged, dispirited army of the young Prince—the word was *hopelessness*. "He will never win a crown or a throne, the bonny Prince"—that was the whisper that had swept the ranks. They were like wild, unruly children, these Highland men. They did not like discipline, and even those who loved the Prince most

deeply wanted their homes and families, and crept away under cover of darkness to find them again, or perish.

"He's no thought of hope about him, the Prince, yet he's brave and merry enough of an evening, and mayhap he can steer his own way through it all, but it's dark enough—it's dark enough!" Max muttered half to himself, as they came up to the open door of the lodge, where a sentry stood guard. Through the doorway came the sound of voices and laughter, and something about the sound of it brought a sense of comfort to Glenfinnan. A log fire burned at one end of a long low room at the side of the narrow hall. Some officers sat at a table drinking. Near the door, at their feet, lay guns and piles of dead birds. The Prince and some of his friends had been hunting for two days after their return from the fruitless march into England. They were all relieved at being again on Scottish ground. The army was encamped in the countryside beyond, and here, deep in the forest, Prince Charlie was taking a holiday.

Wreaths of pine were wound about the window ledges in honor of Christmas only a few days ahead, and standing near one of the windows looking out

into the gray wintry night was Prince Charlie himself.

Max went on through the lodge to his quarters at the back, and Glenfinnan stood uncertainly in the doorway. He was confused and embarrassed, for he had a message for the Prince and he did not know just how he should act under the circumstances. He had never spoken to the Prince since their brief, thrilling words after the battle, and he had seldom seen him in the long marches. The Prince was always far in advance at the head of the army. Glenfinnan had for several weeks thought of himself as an atom in an avalanche of soldiery. Then suddenly had come a message to him and to Max. It had been handed to them in writing just after they had crossed a bridge over the swollen, angry river Esk. They had read it as they stood again on Scottish ground. The message said that they, with a half-dozen others, were to guard the Prince during his two days in the forest of Cadzon.

It was the end of the second day. All the short winter day the Prince and three of his companions had been off in the deep forest, hunting. Glenfinnan had done sentry duty at the lodge portal, and he and

Max had stood guard at certain hours of the day at the edge of the forest. It was from one of these periods of guard duty that they were just returning.

As Glenfinnan stood hesitating in the doorway, the Prince turned and, seeing him, crossed the room. Glenfinnan stepped back with a deep bow as Prince Charlie came into the hall.

"A message for you, Sire, given at the forest outpost. It was handed me by a ragged man on horseback, who seemed in a great hurry." As he spoke Glenfinnan handed the Prince a square of paper. It was unsealed.

Prince Charlie opened and read it at once, and then turned with a smile. "It is a warning and—if I do not greatly mistake—it is from that funny brown elf known as Cherry. It say, 'Do not linger in Glasgow, where the people have no souls. Go forward to Stirling. Go swiftly!'" The Prince's laugh rang out in the chill emptiness of the inn. There was youth in the laugh, hope not yet dead, courage revived. "A fig for your warnings, Cherry, a fig for them! We will to Glasgow where the people have no souls, and find them for them. What say you, lad?" The Prince stood for a moment, still

smiling, the paper in his hand; but though his lips smiled, his eyes held sadness.

Glenfinnan, in his love for Prince Charlie and his eagerness to serve him, lost all self-consciousness and spoke out of his heart. "I pray you, Sire, do not be discouraged. We are not afraid. The Jacobites are strong in the North, and the French will keep their promises. Your cause will win, Sire." Overcome by the boldness of his words, Glenfinnan blushed hotly; but the next moment his heart thrilled with pride when the Prince said softly, "If all the army were as you are, lad, I would be a king upon a throne."

The words stayed with Glenfinnan far into the night. They said themselves over and over. He treasured them. He knew that his life was different because of them and that, whatever might befall him, they could never be unsaid, their glory would always comfort him.

Max woke him early, shaking his shoulder. "List, lad. It's dawn and you are to get you to your horse on the instant. There is bread and ale here on the table. Haste now. The Prince has sent you a command in writing. He and his comrades left soon after midnight, under cover of darkness." Max's

face wore a look of intense anxiety. "Read your message, lad. Read it," he entreated.

Glenfinnan rubbed his eyes, sat up, yawned, and taking the folded paper broke the seal and read.

To Glenfinnan, great-grandson of Malcolm of Loch Shiel:

You are to proceed with Max MacNairn to the far outposts of the Highlands, to a place called Thistle Inn. Max knows the way. Your work from now until further orders will be entirely in that district. You are no longer with the army. You are promoted to this higher task.

CHARLES STUART.

A higher task! Thistle Inn! The far outposts of the Highlands! No longer of the army—you are promoted! The words danced before Glenfinnan's eyes. He put his hand to his forehead for a moment; then, seeing Max beside him, smiled with relief.

"We go together, Max. That is the best of all that has come my way since first I pledged myself."

He drank off a glass of ale, ate some of the bread, putting the rest of it into his wallet with a

packet of meat and cheese which Max had given him, and ten minutes later he and the faithful Highlander had mounted their steeds and were making their way through the glistening woods, the early sun vainly trying to brighten the trunks of trees and winding paths with its light.

Glenfinnan's thoughts were in a whirl. He was slow-thinking, and all his life had been methodical. It was nearly impossible for him to grasp a situation at a moment's notice, and it was not until they had galloped along the hard road for an hour that the real meaning of Prince Charlie's message penetrated his mind. *"No longer of the army."* These were the words that stood out most distinctly.

Everywhere were signs of the northward advance of the army—cannons being drawn over the frozen ground by horses; heavy coaches trundling along, laden with tents and provisions and kegs of ammunition; on every side the clamor and excitement attendant upon a huge army on the move.

"The men are daft to be on their home soil again. Two hundred left the ranks under cover of the night. They say the Prince was too sadly put about for speech. It's a long, hard way before him, and he

does ill to waste time in Glasgow—a hard place, so I've heard tell, hard as flint, and purse-proud. There will be little fancy there for the yellow-haired laddie, mark me."

Max's voice sounded strong, human and comforting in Glenfinnan's ears. That was the thing about Max that made him what he was—his strength and the rock-like sincerity of his voice. A sudden thought came to Glenfinnan. He hesitated before speaking. They had left the army far behind them, turning off to a narrow road heading west. There was only the stillness of the bright morning all around them.

"Tell me, Max, was it just by chance that you came my way?" Glenfinnan turned in his saddle as he spoke. Max smiled his slow smile, shaking his head before replying. "Nay, laddie," he said after a moment. "There was naught of chance about it."

"You mean that it was somehow arranged that we should be together so that we could do this journey to Thistle Inn?" Glenfinnan persisted.

Max shook his head again. "No, not as I ken it. It was simply meant to be. I think Almighty God had a hand in it. We're great comrades, you and I. You are the great-grandson of Malcolm of Loch

Shiel, and my grandsire was his serf. There is no glade nor glen nor hollow, no eagle's nest nor rock cavern, unknown to me in all our Highlands. It is well then that we take this journey together; that we stand fast friends side by side," Max answered.

Glenfinnan glanced admiringly and trustingly at the rough, grizzled comrade with whom he had marched so many miles, by whose side he had slept, and whose food he had shared. Excitement touched him, and a kind of inspiration. Then another thought came to him. "Tell me, Max, do you know this brown lad, Cherry?" he asked. Max nodded, smiling. "There is no lad like him anywhere in the world, is there, Max? He seems bewitched," Glenfinnan went on.

Max chuckled as he answered. "No, there's no other lad like him," he said.

Three days later found them still riding. They had had to rest their horses often because of the rough roads and byways. They had avoided villages, eaten and drunk sparingly, and still had enough wine and water and meat to last them, according to Max, until they reached the Highlands. He had been silent, almost taciturn, all the long, dark afternoon, and

Glenfinnan spoke impatiently as they reached the top of a moundlike hill. "It has been stupid enough, Max, all this day. You've scarcely answered when I have spoken. I would do well to be in a township this night, or better still in line of battle."

Max answered shortly. "Aye, lad, it's been weary going." He drew rein and Glenfinnan followed his example. Before them lay a vast stretch of land, bleak and desolate in the fast-dying light. Max sat motionless, his heavy brows drawn together in a deep frown. "There's trouble for us yonder," he whispered.

The next instant he was off his horse, and, lifting Glenfinnan from Roderick's back, he ran with him like a deer sideways into a small patch of woodland. The way was narrow but unobstructed. Max ran steadily, with Glenfinnan across his shoulder, the night wind whistling about them. He ran silently, his great frame moving lightly and his breath coming easily. A shot passed them. Then another. Max dodged the third, and making a quick turn started downward. He slackened his pace, but kept steadily forward, and finally on reaching what seemed to be a low valley, stopped, setting Glenfinnan on his feet.

Then swiftly and silently, still he ran, dragging Glenfinnan after him, straight toward what seemed to be a bank of furze and brush. He pushed them aside and the next moment icy air swept their faces and darkness covered them. Max struck flint to tinder, making a light for his small iron lamp, and before it could glow enough to give them light, he turned and with all his strength pushed a great rock crosswise in front of them. Then—"We're as safe as two birds on a leafy branch."

"Where are we? What happened?" Glenfinnan could not resist the questions, but he tried with all his might to appear as calm as Max. He was trembling partly from cold and partly from the strange experience through which they had come. He glanced at the rock as though he would look beyond it at the sinister enemy who had shot at them, pursuing them so suddenly and swiftly through the bleak night.

Max's cheery laugh sounded strangely through the damp air. "We're safe, laddie. There's naught human can find us here. We're on our way to our own lands now, and they who would have our lives cannot follow. The English have outposts and scouts

about, but a message must have been waylaid for I supposed it safe this way. I saw three officers on a rock, and they saw me. There was naught to do but run, for it is not for ourselves we hide. It is for the Prince, whose life we guard, laddie. We'll go in through here to the far edge of our homeland. No human would dare to follow. Follow, laddie."

On and on through the narrow causeway they went, scarcely seeing, Max ahead feeling his way, calling back words of encouragement, Glenfinnan following him blindly through the long tunnel in the rocks that would lead to the outskirts of Thistle Inn.

CHAPTER XIV

ELSPETH had lived a month at Thistle Inn. She had grown brown and strong. She could ride with Starf all day and sleep soundly at night. She was learning to know the moorland, trying to remember each hollow and valley, each waterfall and rocky cavern. She had ridden for days across its bleak, mysterious ways. She had grown to know the dogs and children, the shy, wild-eyed women, and some of the men who lived in the confines of Thistle Inn and beyond it. The days had passed swiftly. There had been little time in which to brood for there was always something she must see, something to find out. She had thriven in the clear air and enjoyed the simple life, all of it so utterly different from anything she had ever known.

Then one day she quarreled with Starf. It was the day before Christmas, and for the first time a terrible homesickness came over her. It was so overwhelming and so powerful that for the time being

it seemed to sap her life. It was as though for almost the first time since that night when Cherry had spirited her away from Lady McAllister, a great longing had come to her for her people in Edinburgh, for all the dear familiar ways and things, for a life which had nothing to do with this wildness, with whistling winds over moors, with open spaces and worlds of loneliness.

The schoolroom, Charmaine, the doll, tea and Cudsy's hot bannocks, Bumble purring in her ear! These thoughts pressed close upon her as she stood looking off into the twilight. It was as though for the first time she remembered, sharply and bitterly, all she had loved and left so suddenly, so relentlessly.

It was cold and bleak the day before Christmas. She woke shivering in the morning and instead of leaning on the casement in order to drink in the sweet air, she closed it with a shudder. Wisps of mist drifted past, the wind howled eerily. She strained her eyes to see some signs of an approaching horseman. There was a cut in the rocks about Thistle Inn through which one could have a glimpse of a far stretch of moorland, and every morning she gazed

and gazed, hoping for a sign of some life beyond this wild cavern. No one came. Christmas time and no news from the great world beyond the moors, no news of the Prince, no news of Glen! Why had it come upon her so suddenly, this sad, bleak restlessness? She thought of Starf. She would find him out and talk with him. He was generally gay and she never tired of his stories. He had seemed moody of late but she knew that, like herself, he longed for news, above all, like her, he longed for action. Waiting did not improve the spirits of either of them.

She drew on the rough, dark, caped cloak that she had found in the anteroom that night in Holyrood when she had left all the familiar life behind her, and running along a gusty passage, found herself in the open, the shrill wind whistling about her. Starf waved to her from the rocks and came swiftly down as she climbed up to the wide flat ledge where they often sat and talked.

Starf had been playing moodily on his reed-pipe whistle. He put it in the pocket of his doublet and stood staring off at the mist-covered moorland. Elspeth sat down on the damp rock, her hands locked about her knees. She had come out to find Starf in a

vague longing for comfort and companionship, but she frowned at his first words.

"They say ill news travels fast. It has been slow enough with us these days, but I'll swear it will be bad enough once it reaches us."

"Don't speak that way, Starf. This place is bleak enough without such prophecies," Elspeth answered gloomily.

There was pride in Starf's voice as he replied, "It is the most glorious land of all the world, this Highland home."

"It is only a tiny bit of a huge universe. It is wild and queer. The wind howls, and day and night you hear it. The rooms are cold. The food is coarse. The beds are hard. The dogs and children are noisy and dirty. There are few books, and no music but the awful pipes." Elspeth spoke angrily, excitedly, all for sudden homesickness and longing back of the impulse. She would never have spoken so had she thought. She had a quick temper and she was finding suddenly that it was a very trying thing to be always with those who knew nothing of her past life and environment.

Something like fear touched her when she saw

Starf's face after she had spoken her hasty, ill-chosen words. He did not answer. A fur lay over one of his shoulders. He took it and with a single gesture threw it about his neck. There was a silence about him. His head was thrown back a little, his nostrils dilated, his hauteur had in it something graceful. Silently he turned away. Then suddenly he was gone, climbing slowly. A huge bowlder hid him. The wind whistled lustily. Hot tears sprang to Elspeth's eyes. She had insulted her best friend at Thistle Inn. There was no one who knew when she was lonely, no one who cared. Her thoughts flew to Cherry, who had promised to send a message to the Channings that she was safe, that she had pledged herself to the Prince's cause, but that she sent them her faithful love.

Faithful! Surely they who had cared for her and sheltered her most of her life would think her faithless. She put her head down on the bowlder and sobbed. A sudden resolve came to her. She had seen Sir Hugh Roderick only twice since her arrival. He was ailing most of the time, and for a fortnight had kept to his couch. She told herself she must see him. She dried her eyes, smoothed back her hair and ran

around the bowlder till she came to the low door through which Fergus had helped Sir Hugh the night when he had returned with his message of the Prince's landing at Loch Shiel.

Elspeth knocked at the door, her heart beating high. It was opened at once by a serf in ragged tartan, his sharp eyes peering out inquiringly from under their shaggy brows. "Ho!" he called out, so loudly and roughly that Elspeth shrank back a little. The next moment, recognizing her, the serf bowed.

"I would dearly like to have speech with Sir Hugh Roderick if it be that he is not too ill or weary to see me, please," Elspeth said a little timidly. The serf disappeared. There was a hum of conversation. He returned, bowed again, and waved his arm sideways. "Enter, Mistress Elspeth, for Sir Hugh Roderick is right glad to have word with you," he said, and standing aside for her to pass by him, he shut the door carefully behind her.

Sir Hugh was sitting in his armchair by the fire, his thin hands grasping the sides of it, his red velvet mantle about his shoulders. Elspeth felt in awe of him. She had had the same feeling twice before when she had seen him. She knew him to be chief of all

the clans in all the Highlands, his very name beloved and honored amongst all those, high and low, over whose lives he held sway. She knew that, in spite of his age and failing health, it was he who had done more toward helping Prince Charlie's cause than any of the other Highland noblemen. She came up to his chair, and curtseyed. He smiled at her from under bushy white brows.

"You do well indeed to come for speech with me, Mistress Elspeth. I had thought to send for you, but my strength is none too great. This afternoon I am stronger and we shall talk as much as you like." He motioned to the serf, who brought forward a stool, and Elspeth seated herself at his feet, her hands clasped about her knees. A sense of well-being came over her. A little of her homesickness seemed to lift. She felt as though she were with someone of her own kind who could share her dreams. Starf was a good comrade, but he had been moody and restless for several days. She saw that the old man was watching her anxiously and that there was real concern in his glance.

"These are hard days for you, lassie, as for us all, so far away from all we would see and know. You,

however, can ride off on the blessed horse and forget your troubles under God's skies, but I must sit fast here by my fireside, dreaming, wondering, fearing!" Sir Hugh said the last words in a whisper. They seemed full of the unrest and uncertainty and fear that held the hearts and minds of all those who loved Prince Charlie and who would see him King; and spoken as they were by so brave and high a person, they struck Elspeth with a deep meaning. She felt more secure, less lonely as she sat there at the feet of the old man.

An hour went by. Serfs came in with rushlights. The warmth of the fire was comforting. Sir Hugh sat upright in his chair. He talked to Elspeth easily and at length. Now and then he glanced at her, his brows drawn together in a frown of anxiety. "It is true that I remember now the night that you came, child, but for a time I seemed to forget all things. Has all been done for your comfort, lass? It grieves me to feel that so brave a lass should want for aught beneath my roof."

Elspeth answered eagerly. "All for my comfort, but nothing so good as this talk with you, Sire. There is so little I know and so much that I would

know. It is only today that a great desire for my people in Edinburgh has touched me. I am longing for the old life today. Perhaps it is because I feel there is nothing I can do here. I am tired of waiting." Elspeth's voice broke on the last words, but if she had expected sympathy from the old man none was forthcoming. Instead, he repeated her last words a little scornfully. "Tired of waiting." Then he went on speaking eagerly, his eyes glowing. It was as though he were at last awakening from the stupor which had seemed to hold him for weeks. He spoke with authority and with assurance. "It would be well indeed, lass, if you had nothing to do always but to wait, for that would mean that there would be no need for action."

"You mean," Elspeth spoke timidly leaning forward, "that if things go wrong I shall have work to do?"

The old man's grave nod was her reply. Then he went on speaking a little dreamily.

"He was but a lad when first I knew him, sixteen or thereabouts—such a gay, glad lad, his yellow hair blowing as he rode up the drive to his father's palazzo. He had even then all that the young Roman

princes and nobles lacked—health and spirit and great charm. He would spend much time on his father's estates hunting. The Young Chevalier—that is what they called him. He is the handsomest of all the royal Stuarts. Only Mary Queen of Scots, I think, could have outshone him in beauty." The old man sat silent after his last words, gazing straight before him, thinking of those bygone years when, though feeble, he had traveled to Italy and been most royally entertained at the Stuart palace in Rome.

The Young Chevalier—the phrase charmed Elspeth! It seemed to bring her fresh inspiration. She knew that if just waiting here in this desolate place meant helping Prince Charlie, it was what she must do as willingly, as gladly, as she could. She stood up, leaning a little over Sir Hugh's chair. "You have helped me, Sire. I was fair sad with homesickness, because it is so near Christmastide. Believe me that I in my poor way will give my life if need be for Prince Charlie."

The old man touched her hair softly. "You are a brave lass. You are as brave as Cherry, the little granddaughter of mine who does all for the Prince."

"Cherry, you mean!" broke in Elspeth impulsively, and Sir Hugh nodded with a wistful smile.

"Yes, the wee brown Cherry. How long the days are without her! I expected her a week ago. No news, no news!" The old man sighed deeply and, as Elspeth went softly across the room, did not turn his head nor speak again.

Once outside the passage, Elspeth stood hesitating. Some of her worry had been lightened by the quiet hour with the aged chieftain. Something of his courage and patience had reached her. He, so old and frail, still hoped and looked forward. She, with her youth and health, must do the same.

She tried not to think of Starf and the rude, angry things she had said to him. He would never forgive her. She was sure of that. She had lost someone who was becoming her friend, someone too fiercely proud ever to forget what she had said of his home and people, all that he had ever known and that he held dearer than his life. There was not a child nor a dog that did not know him. He was respected by all the countryside in spite of his dreamy, odd ways. He was Sir Hugh's nephew, but he was also just himself—Starf, the boy who had never

known any other life than this one, and who was willing to give his life for one of his dreams, Prince Charlie.

Elspeth felt a lump in her throat. Tears touched her cheeks. She went out through the doorway leading to the outer rocks and, climbing them, sat in a hollow, her head resting against the higher ledge. What a Christmas!—bleak and desolate and full of black loneliness!

The mist had cleared and there was a faint color in the west. Something was moving far off across the moor. Elspeth watched eagerly, and after a time she saw two figures on horseback. She sat up, her hands resting on the damp ledge of the rock. Then she rose, her eyes fixed on the figures, who as they approached became clearer and more definite. Then suddenly her heart stood still in an uncertainty. She heard her own voice calling in a kind of ecstasy as she slipped and slid down the bare, wet rocks. *"Glen, Glen, Glen!"*

CHAPTER XV

It seemed to Elspeth as though the rocks and earth rose up and struck her as she ran forward, as though her knees were as heavy as the rocks themselves. Glenfinnan had dismounted and was running toward her. The next moment she threw herself into his arms, sobbing, "Glen, Glen! I would have died if you hadn't come!"

Glenfinnan's cloak was wet with sleet and mud, but Elspeth did not know it. She only clung to him, sobbing as though she could never stop. Her cousin's

surprise and joy were as great as her own, although he showed it in his usual quiet way, patting her shoulder and saying, "There, there, Ellie! Come, look up. This is my comrade, Max, who has stood by me during all these weeks. Look up and smile. He will think you but a sorry lass. Look up!"

Elspeth did look up and smile through her tears, holding out a hand to honest Max, who shook it heartily, a choke in his own voice as he said, "We have come safe through, Mistress Elspeth. Your cousin is a right brave lad, and one that Prince Charlie himself is proud of."

It was Christmas Eve. She had known it, of course, all day long, but it had never occurred to her—in her selfish broodings—that the day meant very much to all the swarms of people about Thistle Inn and through the wastelands beyond it; but now, in the midst of her wild joy and excitement at Glenfinnan's arrival, she noticed that all of Thistle Inn was being festooned with green, and she heard in the distance pipes playing an ancient *Noël.*

Glenfinnan was there in the midst of it all, mud-covered, ragged, thin, with a new air of maturity and experience. He told her how Max, one of Sir

Hugh Roderick's faithful retainers had stood by him through all the weary marching, and now had saved his life in this perilous ride to Thistle Inn. Glenfinnan was there, her own flesh and blood, her oldest friend, the most vital part of her old life! She breathed a prayer of gratitude.

The halls were filled suddenly with men and women, eager, wild-eyed, questioning. Dogs ran here and there, springing at the great heaps of pine boughs on the stone floors. Fresh fires were lit and in a great room, seldom used, a long table was being laid with a cloth of scarlet, and Elspeth saw the gleam of silver plate. Thistle Inn was certainly showing good cheer for Christmas. It seemed to glow with sudden warmth and color. It was, in its own strange way, a stronghold, a castle, a city! Sir Hugh was its head. Elspeth realized suddenly as she stood there in the hall by the blazing log fire, her arm in Glenfinnan's, that some day it would all be Starf's. That odd, dreamy, wild boy would one day be master here, for he was the next male heir to Sir Hugh Roderick.

"Glen, Glen!" Elspeth could only say her cousin's name again and again, her arm clasped about his,

her tear-filled eyes devouring him. "Christmas, and you're here! My heart has torn itself today with a longing for you, for sweet Charmaine, for Uncle Evan and the aunts, for Bumble and Cudsy and the piper doll and all kinds of funny things."

"Treacle pudding," suggested her cousin with a grin. They sat down on an oak bench by the newly laid fire of logs, and there, oblivious to all the rush and tumult about them, the carrying and scurrying, the shouting and chattering, they talked and talked, first one and then the other. For the most part Elspeth listened breathlessly, while Glenfinnan told of the failure across the English border, of the retreat from Derby, the crossing of the wild, muddy river Esk to Scottish soil again, of the uncertainty and anxiety that held them who stood close to the Prince, of Prince Charlie himself, who had worn a look of sadness during the two days in the hunting lodge in the forest of Cadzon; then of their sudden orders to leave for Thistle Inn. Glen had just started to talk of his faithful companion when Max himself crossed the hall and, bowing before Elspeth, addressed her.

"The young master sends you his respects, Mistress Elspeth. He wishes to know if you will honor

the head of the board tonight at supper, which will be served at nine." Elspeth felt the color rushing to her cheeks; shame and pride overcame her at the same moment, but shame was dominant. She and Glenfinnan stood up, Elspeth saying eagerly, with a quiver in her voice, "The young master does me honor. Please say to him that I most gladly accept his kind offer." Max bowed and turned away, and Elspeth laughed nervously, almost hysterically. She and Starf had ridden and fished and climbed and joked together. Now suddenly there was a formality about it that was almost comic.

Glenfinnan was asking her questions. Had she been happy? Was she well treated? She answered in the affirmative, breaking in with words of longing for those at home. As they walked through the chill stone corridors, her cousin told her again and again of his brief moment in the schoolroom, but, though she plied him with questions, there was very little indeed that he could tell her. That they had been in a state of great anxiety about her, he could not deny. Glenfinnan had been with the family for less than a quarter of an hour. He had said goodbye in the schoolroom.

Elspeth caught Glenfinnan's arm. "It is as though it had come to me today in a great rush—I ran away in the night and left them all—I did not send word of my departure to those who had done so much for me! Prince Charlie and the war seemed far away today, and you, and everything!" A sob came with Elspeth's last words.

"There, lass, I am here, and there is much to dare and do. There is no time for tears." Glenfinnan spoke sadly and his evident anxiety was Elspeth's best tonic. All day long she had been selfish and brooding. Suddenly she woke up. "What an ungrateful girl I am that I do not fall upon my knees with joy because the dearest of all to me is here with me now!" she exclaimed, the color touching her cheek. Glenfinnan, well pleased, patted her shoulder, saying, "Well said, little cousin."

A serf came up to them with a message that Sir Hugh Roderick would see Glenfinnan, and Elspeth went slowly to her room. After she reached it, she stood for a moment, hesitating by an oaken chest in one corner of the room. Then she pulled it aside and opening the cover drew out an armful of gowns and petticoats and threw them, a glowing heap, on

to the bed. Her eyes were dancing, the color still deep in her cheeks. Starf had told her to take what she wanted from the chest at any time. She lighted some of the rushlights, drawing the velvet curtains across the window.

Her hands trembled a little as she started to dress. She chose a rich rose velvet, an imposing gown, with a long, sweeping train. What fun it was, dressing up! She wound her heavy hair closely about her head, fastening it on each side with a pearl brooch. There was no looking-glass in the room, so as she swept up and down the room she could only imagine what her appearance must be. She knew that her cheeks were crimson and she hoped that her nose was not red. How surprised Glen would be! How more than wonderful the whole world was, and life itself, and Thistle Inn, with its sudden good cheer!

Elspeth felt herself trembling partly from cold and partly from excitement. She felt older, more self-assured than she had ever before felt in all her life. The touch of the soft velvet against her arms, the sweeping dignity of the train, gave her self-possession. She blew out the lights, groped her way

toward the door of the room and, opening it, went outside.

Sounds of voices and laughter came to her, and the scent of the pine boughs and the excited barking of the dogs. She half ran along the corridor until she came to the hall. Then she slackened her steps, walking sedately. Her heart beat quickly when she suddenly saw Starf. He was making his way through a group of men whose mud-splashed kilts and legs showed them to be newly arrived. Starf looked very young and princely among them, a different Starf in appearance from the one with whom Elspeth had roamed the moors. He wore black trunks now, and a long tunic of red velvet, trimmed with jewels that flashed in rainbow colors, and there were diamonds on the buckles of his velvet shoes.

He came up to Elspeth, and bowed to her without smiling. She spoke at once and to the point, in her usual impulsive way. "Oh, Starf, forgive me. It is Christmas Eve. I hoped we were real friends, and then I spoiled it all by my rude words. Forgive me, Starf, because I am sorry." There were tears in the eyes Elspeth raised to Starf's; and he held out both hands, saying gladly: "I am stupid and full of moods.

We will forget it right now, and for all time. This is Christmastide." Then as Glenfinnan came up to them, the three walked on toward the long room where dozens of rushlights welcomed them to supper.

The room was so long and so low—hewn as it was out of the heart of great rocks—that those at the far end seemed etched against the grayness like the background of a picture. The table to which Starf escorted Elspeth was covered with heavy dishes of gold and copper and silver, which flashed with crimson and blue sparks through the flickering rushlights.

It was like the fairy tales she and Glen and Charmaine had told each other years ago in the nursery before they went to bed. The whole place seemed to Elspeth, as she sat proudly at one end of the long table, like a strange, magical house in a strange, fairy wood—only in this case it was a moor! All through the long meal, through the voices and clattering of dishes, she fancied herself in a fairy tale. It was brilliant—magnificent. It seemed incredible that there, in the midst of bleak wild desolation, were gold and silver and jewels. New faces seemed to have sprung up out of the very ground—strangers in

fine array, in velvet and silks, with mantles across their shoulders. At Starf's right and left sat chieftains from warrior clans scattered for miles about. The newly arrived soldiers, who had traveled so many weary miles from the border for a few brief days over Christmas in their own home glen, sat at a table at the side, and with them were men of lower rank than those at Starf's table. Serfs in tartans passed platters of spiced beef and dishes of steaming potatoes. Sparkling goblets held red wine. The great logs in the fireplace at the end of the hall blazed with ruddy cheer.

Suddenly Starf rose to his feet, his glass high in the air. "Men, all of you, let no thought of discouragement touch this Christmas Eve. We have turned back from England, but now in our own Scotland fresh help will be given us, and Charlie will win. A health to Prince Charlie!"

Such a cheer rose up as would seem to lift the very stones of the strange castle, a roar that had in it fierce loyalty and devotion. Elspeth heard her own voice joining in the mighty chorus, and suddenly all her old courage and inspiration came back to her. She, too, would do and dare!

Starf was still standing, his glass in hand, and as Elspeth looked across at him, his eyes met hers. Suddenly he spoke. "I would that every man under my roof tonight should stand and drink a toast to our honored young guest, Mistress Elspeth Craigie, great-granddaughter of Malcolm of Loch Shiel, who is ready to brave all dangers for the cause of Prince Charlie!"

Like a flash the great assemblage was on its feet, and such a cheer arose as might have been an ocean in a storm. Elspeth sat silent, her cheeks as rosy as the velvet of the gown she wore, her eyes ablaze with tears.

Starf's voice again: "Now, another toast to Glenfinnan Channing, a great-grandson of Malcolm of Loch Shiel, the youngest soldier in Prince Charlie's army, who is here serving the cause!" Again a great cheer shook the room. Suddenly through it came the skirling voice of the pipes. The great room seemed to fill with color and sound, as a dozen pipers formed a group in the center. Someone whirled in after them, taking the center of the room, someone who danced, a big dark man in scarlet kilts—Max! A roar of appreciation greeted him. Some at the

table rose and stood around him, Glenfinnan one of them. Elspeth saw that he was stamping and clapping with the rest, his face aglow with pride and delight. How quickly they had entered into all this strange new life, she and Glen!

There was much laughter and applause, as Max finished his dance; and in the sudden lull of the piper's skirlings some young soldier at the far table started a song. The words, and all that lay back of them, seemed to fill the room with the laughing presence of the Prince himself.

'Twas on a Monday morning,
Right early in the year,
That Charlie came to our town,
The young Chevalier.

Oh, Charlie is my darling,
My darling, my darling,
Charlie is my darling—
The young Chevalier!

As he came marching up the street,
The pipes played loud and clear,
And all the folk came running out
To meet the Chevalier.

Oh, Charlie is my darling,
My darling, my darling,
Charlie is my darling—
The young Chevalier!

The whole roomful took up the song, its words sounding oddly on Gaelic tongues. The next hour was the gayest Elspeth had known since the Boomer schoolroom party. She danced first with Starf, holding her train over her arm as he whirled her about, then with Glenfinnan, with a soldier, and last of all with Max. Her heart warmed to this faithful soul, though his words sobered her. "This is Christmas Eve and right good cheer is well, but the news we brought has little of hope in it, and 'tis brave souls that can make merry in spite of it! Sir Hugh Roderick's heart is fairly broken that the Prince retreated from Derby, but he would have us merry the while."

Elspeth thought of Max's words later that night as she lay in her narrow bed, her eyes on the rose gown, flung across the chest and gleaming softly in the light of the moon which had broken through the misty clouds. They must laugh and be brave in order to help their merry Prince. And far off somewhere

late revelers crossing the moor on their way home from Thistle Inn were singing——

Charlie is my darling—
The young Chevalier!

CHAPTER XVI

"TEN thousand men for Prince Charlie—ten thousand men!" The word swept across the bleak, winter-bound moorland to the heart of them at Thistle Inn. The thrill of it all held Elspeth in ecstasy. All inertia and homesickness had left her since the arrival of her cousin. Starf, too, was less moody, and joked and rode and laughed all through the early January days. Glenfinnan seldom laughed, and although he seemed glad to be there in the free open life with Elspeth, and absorbed in all that he saw and heard of Highland ways, he seemed almost sad.

Elspeth was watching for her cousin and Starf from the crevice of a rock one afternoon in early February. They had been gone for three days, having left on foot. They were to be entertained at night by various chieftains in the Highlands, and during the day were to wander in and out of lochs and avenues, looking for hiding and landing places

in case some later day might bring peril to their Prince.

"Peril to the Prince." These were the words Glenfinnan had used when he had said goodbye to her. "We must find places of safety in case of peril to the Prince." How incredible that seemed on this lovely afternoon! There was, for the moment, almost a touch of spring in the air. The frost had melted, and a faint sweep of green touched the golden brown of faded bracken here and there. The air smelled of hidden growing things. "Peril to the Prince"—the very words sounded only like a doleful and stupid prophecy. Less than a week before, a runner had brought news of the gathering together of an army of ten thousand men.

Voices reached Elspeth suddenly, rousing her from a sort of daydream. She had been thinking of Cudsy and her bannocks, of the wide kitchen windowsill with Bumble asleep on one corner of it. She had not had word of any kind from home, except Glenfinnan's account of his farewell visit. Elspeth had been thrilled when he told her that official word had gone to the Channings from the army that Elspeth was in their service. What would the family say and

think? She scarcely dared to face the thought of her Aunt Joan at all. How strange it all was, unbelievably weird and wonderful!

Voices reached her. She was hidden by the rock and had thought herself alone in the isolation of the moor. The voices were low and rough. She caught the words "fairy money—a goodly measure for an easy task." Then came some words she could not catch, and then quite distinctly the word "Moll Hall."

Elspeth sat up without making a sound. The ledge of the rock towered above her head, concealing her completely. She was trembling a little. There had been nothing very startling in the words, but something in the tone in which they were spoken seemed to touch her as a passing shadow might have done. She listened, holding her breath, but the voices ceased and then in a moment sounded farther off. She waited a few seconds; then, rising slowly, looked cautiously over the ledge of the rock. Two men were walking toward the outer confines of Thistle Inn. The face of one of them was turned sideways and for a moment Elspeth saw it quite distinctly, recognizing a sallow-faced man called Ian Campbell, one

of the many army stragglers who appeared from time to time. She watched until they disappeared through the tunnel leading to the network of huts and hovels which wove in and out for a mile or more beyond Thistle Inn.

Elspeth stood looking for some time. Then suddenly she gave a glad cry as she sprang down the rocks. She ran swiftly toward the two figures coming toward her across the moor. They waved her a greeting, and as soon as they were within hearing Starf called, "Ho, Elspeth!" The two boys seemed as glad to see her as she was to see them, and all three tried to talk at once as they walked slowly toward Thistle Inn. The tired boys were very glad indeed to see the staunch rocks of the odd gray abode. Though they had no great adventures to relate, they had fished and feasted with some of the Macdonalds and Keppocks and other chieftains in far-off glens; they had sailed the lochs and scrambled over rocky, desolate islands. They told Elspeth all of their small adventures as the three ate their modest supper of cheese, oatcakes, and milk in one corner of the great dining room.

"It was grand, and like the tales you used to make

up by the nursery fire, Ellie. Such odd wee houses—like those near Thistle Inn; wild and strange lochs—full of secrets, you would say; curious birds that never go south, and odder people! They all like Starf. He's known them always, many of them. It's strange and a bit uncanny all around here, Ellie—strange enough!"

Elspeth nodded eagerly. She wore the white dress she had worn the night she had had supper with Lady McAllister in what seemed to her the very long ago. Her hair was neatly brushed and arranged high on her head, fastened each side with the pearl brooches. She felt grown-up and happy, and she loved the firelight, the good cheer, the sense of being with the two nicest boys she had ever known.

Suddenly, as they sat there in the firelight, Starf became alert. He half rose, his tankard of milk in his hand, his black eyes wide with sudden emotion. Through the gray evening stillness came a sound, and as they listened, all three of them, they heard it again. It was like the call of a night owl.

They ran, all three of them, across the hall and out the stone doorway. Starf was first, and as he ran he called, "Ho, Cherry! Cherry, ho!" The next mo-

ment the dark figure of a slow-moving horse came in sight, and leading him walked a small brown figure. It was Cherry! She stumbled toward them, smiling, Firelock following. The two boys with shouts of welcome made a chair for her with their arms and bore her into the Inn, Elspeth holding the limp little hand that lay across Starf's arm. "Oh, Cherry, Cherry!" she exclaimed over and over again. It seemed all that she could say.

A few minutes later they were inside the Inn. Cherry's first words were for her grandfather. They assured her that he was better, but asleep at the moment. Then she turned to Elspeth. "Your time has come, Ellie," she said, and the little pet name sounded like a caress. "You are to leave at dawn with messages for Moll Hall. Starf will take you to where you will be able to ask your way in safety. Stirling was a failure. We won a victory at Falkire, but it was a stupid battle, on a broken piece of moorland. The wind and rain favored us there. But there are too many deserters from our army—that is what is killing us and breaking the Prince's heart. Linlithgow Palace is in flames." Cherry bowed her head on her arm. There was a silence in the corner of the

great hall by the fireplace—a silence that sounded like tears. "Our army is marching north—three great columns of them. Prince Charlie is at the head of the central one." Cherry gasped a little, and Elspeth gave her a glass of milk mixed with a little wine. She drank it slowly, smiled, and went on speaking with less difficulty, the three hanging on her story as though their very lives depended on it.

"Prince Charlie will stay three days at Moll Hall, which has been vacated by the Mackintosh. There are spies everywhere. I doubt not Thistle Inn harbors many—" She put up a small hand as Starf started to protest. "Many are turned whom we thought loyal. They are only too glad to earn money this cold, bleak season. You, Ellie," Cherry turned her dark quick eyes toward Elspeth as she spoke, "you are to leave at dawn as I've told you. You go straight to Moll Hall. You are taking a message that will warn them of an intended raid. You must start at dawn."

Here Glenfinnan interrupted. "Surely that is too dangerous a task for a young lass. Let me go in her stead." Cherry looked him straight in the eye. Then

she said wistfully, "You stay and she goes. You will both obey."

The color rushed to Glenfinnan's face. He was so angry for the moment that he could not reply. Elspeth saw him draw in his under-lip, a way he had when his temper got the better of him. After a moment he said coldly, "By whose orders does my cousin fare forth on this mad errand?"

Cherry drank the rest of the wine and milk in the old silver tankard before replying. "Lord George Murray sent the order, but you have no right to ask," she replied. She rose after she had spoken, and standing by the table supported herself with one hand, and gazed into the leaping blue and scarlet of the fire. There was something aloof about her. It was as though she cared little for Glenfinnan's anger or his words.

He faced her, his face white in the firelight. The news which she had brought had been devastating to them, but for the moment the thought of Elspeth's sudden call for duty was uppermost in her cousin's mind. He had seen things in the army that made him realize what a dangerous journey Elspeth had before her. "It is no journey for a lass, going as she

will into the heart of the army, to a lonely house in the North. What would befall if the Prince never reached there? What if some sudden change of plan would take him elsewhere?"

Cherry's eyes snapped. She walked over to the fire and held her hands out to the blaze. She swayed a little and Starf caught her.

Glenfinnan came up to her and held out his hand. "I would crave your pardon, Cherry. I should not use such a tone to so brave a lass, but my heart is heavy at the thought of this undertaking for my cousin." There was deep anxiety in Glenfinnan's tone, but his anger had gone.

An hour later, the fire had died down and the gray gloom of Thistle Inn deepened. Cherry slept heavily on a couch in an anteroom downstairs. Elspeth was to keep her room for the night. Glenfinnan could not sleep, and Elspeth, in spite of the need for rest because of her early start in the morning, lay wide awake, her eyes on the purple gloom outside the open casement. Suddenly she thought she heard cautious footsteps outside. She ran to the window and looked out. Was it fancy, or did she really see two figures moving slowly, etched against the black

night? She stood shivering a little. She was dressed and ready in her wool frock and cape and velvet cap, her leather stockings and stout boots. Then the incident of the afternoon and the words she had overheard came to her mind. Moll Hall—the very words those men had said—Moll Hall—her destination!

A voice sounded outside. It was Glenfinnan's. "Ellie," she heard him whisper. She went out, closing the door softly behind her. Glenfinnan stood in the corridor. "There is no thought of bed for me tonight, Ellie. Will you talk for a bit, or must you sleep?" His grave face looked odd in the dim light. There was a wistfulness and a sternness about it that frightened Elspeth.

"What is it, Glen? What is it?" she asked a little tremulously, shivering in the chill, gusty corridor.

"Come down to the fire in the banquet hall. Starf put on fresh logs. We were going to sit there and talk, but one of the dogs has been hurt and they sent for him. He has such a way with animals. I am glad he is gone for I so dearly wish a word with you. There are warm rugs by the fire. I have drawn a big chair close to it." As Glenfinnan was speaking they

were making their way through the gloom of the long rooms toward a great fire that leaped in a grate fireplace at the end of the banquet hall.

Years afterwards Elspeth looked back on that hour by the dancing glory of the great fire, as being the most wonderful and sacred hour of her life. She cuddled up in a big chair, a rug about her, and her cousin sat on a stool at her feet, his hands clasped about his knees.

She was seeing, for the first time in all the seven years she had known him, a different Glenfinnan, one who spoke out his heart, who had no reservation, who glowed with emotion. She saw that her being with him there by the fire meant a great deal to him, and that it comforted him in ways she could not altogether understand, to talk just as he was doing. He spoke of his mother and Charmaine, touching gently on his mother's failure to understand Elspeth. He spoke of the old nursery days and the stories the three of them had told each other by the nursery fire. He brought up old escapàdes and jokes and they laughed at them softly there in the firelight.

"Do you mind the night you crept down to the pantry and found the cheese cakes and jellies, and

how when you were halfway up the stairs one of the jellies flopped over on to old MacNeill's head as he was going through to the dining room? And the summer we hid in the great fireplace when Uncle Evan was having a dinner? Oh! the fun and delight of it!" Elspeth forgot the grim old stone room, the mournful wailing of the wind outside, even for the moment the strange experience waiting for her the next morning. She was back again in the carefree days before Glenfinnan went away to school. She could almost smell the treacle toffy they had been so fond of making, and she could see the dear schoolroom, the very ink blots on the table cover, could hear the humming of the kettle over the open fire at tea time. Glenfinnan mending the arm of her favorite doll, Milly; Charmaine sewing with neat stitches, making a flounce for the baby doll's crib.

"I remember the first time that we really began to feel as we do now about the Prince, Ellie. It was quite late and Charmaine was asleep. They thought we were, too, but we put pillows down by the fire and roasted some chestnuts, and we talked about all we could do when we were big. We had heard the grown-ups talking at tea time in the drawing-room

about the young Prince, Charles Stuart, who lived in Italy with his father. They said a new star had appeared in the sky on the night that he was born, and that even the Highland people knew this and dreamed of having him for their King." Glenfinnan's cheeks were touched with color. It was as though he were suddenly awakened to ready speech by all the events that were taking place around him. He turned, his hands still clasped about his knees, and, looking up at Elspeth, said with such earnestness that the tears came to her eyes as she listened:

"It is the hardest thing I have ever done, letting you fare forth alone tomorrow, Ellie. We are having our hearts' desire, risking so much for Prince Charlie, and for myself I am right glad—I would not have it otherwise. But I have seen more of the world since my days at school and at home, Ellie. There are spies about. It is a dark and dangerous time. Promise me that you will safeguard yourself as best you can." Glenfinnan rose to his feet as he spoke, and Elspeth, too, stood up, letting the fire rug fall to the stone floor. Her cousin hesitated, the color deep in his face. "Do you remember the wee prayer we used to say to Nannie?——

Golden stars, ask God for us to care
Here and now and everywhere!

"Say that and keep it in your heart for my sake, Ellie."

Elspeth was sobbing softly. She nodded, smiling through her tears. Glenfinnan bent forward and kissed her gently. "Perhaps some day I will tell you something, Ellie. It is something hidden deep in my heart," he said.

Elspeth had a few hours' sleep and at dawn was riding across the moor with Starf. They rode all day, stopping only briefly now and then for rest and food. It was twilight when they reached a small straggling village and drew up before a bracken-covered hut of stone. Starf called, "Ho!" and after a moment a woman dressed in a neat frock came to the door. She had a pleasant face and smiled a greeting when she saw Starf. "Good nicht, young master, and who be the young lass that travels so far north?" she asked.

"Someone who greatly needs your shelter, Hester," answered Starf as he assisted Elspeth to alight. "Mistress Elspeth Craigie, great-granddaughter to Malcolm of Loch Shiel, and devoted to our cause.

You will shelter her for the night and see that the right guidance is given her so that she may be put on the way toward Moll Hall." Starf lowered his voice as he spoke. The woman nodded, and made a curtsy. Starf refused food, saying he must ride back in haste. He would seek shelter in a cave later in the night, he said. He lifted his cap, and bowing his dark head, kissed Elspeth's hand. "God guard you, lass," he said.

Elspeth choked back the sobs rising in her throat. "We are friends, real friends, aren't we, Starf?" she asked wistfully, and there was a warm glow at her heart when he answered, "We are friends, tried and true!" He smiled valiantly, but there was a little quiver in his voice and as he rode away through the fast-gathering night, Elspeth knew that two boys held her very dear, and a great longing to prove worthy of their trust and friendship came over her.

It was a strange evening. She was too tired to say very much to kind Hester, but she was rested and comforted by the cleanliness of the little hut and the sweetness of Hester's Gaelic voice. The woman covered Elspeth with a warm rug as she lay on a bed by the open peat fire, gave her balm tea and oatcakes,

and later, after Elspeth had slept for a while and awakened refreshed, she talked to her.

"You are a brave lass and you can follow no better cause than this of our yellow-haired laddie—aye—Prince Charlie. I would fair die happy for a sight of his loving face. My man is one of those servants close to the Prince, and no harm can come to him so long as Hugh MacNeil stands by him." Hester's dark face grew suddenly very grave. She put out her hand and laid it timidly and lovingly on Elspeth's soft hair which fell across the rough, clean pillow of the cot.

"I like not this errand of yours, lass, and I would you were riding away from Moll Hall instead of toward it."

Elspeth raised herself on her elbow and gazed at Hester with eager eyes. "But don't you see, Hester—it's a real adventure! I've so longed to help Prince Charlie, and my cousin and I have made up stories about him always. Now I am *really* helping." There was excitement in Elspeth's voice, but the tears were very near.

As she fell asleep, the soft light of the fire in her face, her last thoughts were of Glenfinnan's eager,

friendly sweetness the night before, of Starf as he had bowed like a prince as he kissed her hand, and of good Hester's words, "I would you were riding away from Moll Hall instead of toward it!"

CHAPTER XVII

HESTER was moving quietly about the hut when Elspeth awoke. The faint primrose and scarlet of dawn touched the East, and made rosy flickers and circles about the room. The turf fire burned brightly, and Elspeth's breakfast was ready for her on a stool by the fire. She washed in a trough of icy water, and smoothed her hair as best she could. Her cheeks glowed from the cold water, and her eyes sparkled. It was a rose and gold morning, and before her lay Adventure.

Hester stood beside Elspeth as she ate, her hands twisting her coarse red homespun apron. Her dark,

swarthy face was full of concern. She poured a second cup of the steaming strong tea for Elspeth. "Is the tea to your liking, Mistress Craigie?" she asked a little wistfully. It was seldom that anyone from across the great moor came to her lonely dwelling. It was only within the last week that there had been an occasional Highland soldier crossing northward who had stopped for a bit of food and warmth. Her husband was a soldier of the Prince, and when he had bade her goodbye he had said, "I ken ye well, lass. Keep a silent tongue and watch out." Hester did not know where her husband was, but she had reason to believe that he was very near the Prince, and the scrap of news that had drifted to her was that the army was moving northward. It might be that Prince Charlie himself would be finding shelter in that mysterious old castle of which even Hester herself as a child had heard tales.

Elspeth danced about the cabin in the sparkling rosy light. She was so held by the brightness of the morning and the thought of the adventure which lay before her, that she paid little heed to Hester's grave look. "I never ate such a good egg before, Hester. It is delicious. Some day I will send you some of

Cudsy's sweets, her jams and comfits. I shall see you again, Hester, and how much I shall have to tell you of all that comes to pass!" Elspeth came up to the cottage woman as she spoke, putting her hand on the other's arm. "It has meant so much, this little rest in your cottage, and talking with you, Hester," she said.

Hester's black eyes filled with quick tears, and all of the longing and loneliness of her barren life seemed to sound in her voice as she answered, "I'd fain keep thee close and safe, sweet young missy. God above watch over you this day!" Then changing her tone quickly as though frightened by her outburst, she said briskly. "The sun will soon be up and you must be on your way. I'd fain go with you, but I'll see that you make the right start. Your horse is fresh. I fed and watered him before dawn. There is food in your wallet and your flask is full of water. Come, we'll walk your horse across the meadow to a by-road that goes straight as the crow flies." As she finished speaking, Hester took down a rough shawl of dyed wool from a hook by the door and drew it about her shoulders. A few minutes later they were well on their way across the stubble

fields, Hester leading the horse, who seemed full of spirit and ready for the day.

It was a half-hour's walk to the broken hedge which divided the fields from a narrow roadway. The horse took the hedge easily and stood patiently while Elspeth mounted him. She leaned over, smiling, and holding both of Hester's rough, work-worn hands, leaned over and kissed her. "It's not goodbye, you know, Hester, and I'll remember all your warnings and all you've told me as we crossed the fields. Goodbye, goodbye!" she cried, and off they started at a brisk trot, Hester wistfully calling after her, "Goodbye, little missy, goodbye!"

It seemed not so much like riding as like flying through the golden morning. The ground had softened but was not muddy, and the horse, as though inspired by the loveliness, seemed fairly to fly through space. It was glorious, enchanting. Hood and Charmaine were probably frowning over lesson books that very minute. Grammar was the pet aversion of them all, and Elspeth had had many a sharp tap of Miss MacMaster's cane on her knuckles because she could not parse a phrase. Well, all that was over. She was free—one of a great band of ad-

venturers, one of the Prince's bodyguard, daring all for him!

Noon found her resting in a shaded coppice, the horse cropping the grass that covered the lane-like road. Elspeth thought of some of Hester's directions as they had crossed the field. "The road lies straight for many a mile. It will be near twilight before you strike into the moorlands again and then there's a longish stretch across wild country." Twilight seemed a long way off. The sun shone steadily as though it realized that the next day would be the first of March. The air seemed filled with prophecy. Elspeth ate a hard-boiled egg and several dry bannocks. They tasted good in the fresh sparkling air. As she ate she thought dreamily of the lunches at home, of stewed kidneys with port wine and cheese and apple turnovers. How long ago and far away it all seemed, and yet how very dear!

She jumped up suddenly, mounted her horse, and they were off again. She realized that it was not wise to think too much of home and the old days when she was so alone at the moment. She whistled as she rode, trying to imitate Starf's bird-like sounds, but failing utterly. She let her thoughts drift into idle

imaginings. Suppose it were a few years hence, and she a young lady at Prince Charlie's court. Suppose some night at a grand ball she, in white with gold paniers and a sweeping train, wearing her grandmother's rubies, should come upon a fascinating dark Highland nobleman, in red velvet, who would prove to be the wild, charming boy Starf with whom she had quarreled in the old Thistle Inn days!

The afternoon waned. A chill wind took the place of the sun, which lost itself suddenly behind frowning black clouds. It was an early twilight. There was no trace of moorland as yet, only endless stretches of narrow road now grown tiresome and eerie as shadows chased themselves about the tree trunks and night owls hooted softly. The horse was still full of energy and courage and in spite of the rough road made quick progress. At last they came to an open, lighter area, that gave her a sense of freedom and brought a great gust of wind. They had come to the edge of the outer northern moorlands. Only the faint early starlight guided them.

It was difficult going but the horse was a moorland animal and made light of sudden hollows and rocky wastes. A faint green and crimson flicker in the sky

told Elspeth that somewhere the Northern Lights were displaying their unearthly wonders. She found something of welcome and encouragement in the far-off colorful horizon. The stars glimmered cheerfully, and the hours wore on. Elspeth had but one thought, one desire: to reach Moll Hall, to deliver her message, and then to sleep. The message meant the most of all. Cherry in her uncanny way had caught a rumor that the enemy knew that Prince Charlie would be resting at Moll Hall. It was she, Elspeth Craigie, who was sent to warn the Prince. Her heart stood still. Prince Charlie would be at Moll Hall, and she would be under the same roof—she might see him, hear his voice. She might even—she drew her breath in quickly—she might, wonder of wonders, have speech with him!

The overwhelming inspiration made her press forward with renewed keenness and courage. She spoke briskly to her horse, patting his neck. She tried singing his song,

Charlie is my darling—
The young Chevalier!

Her voice sounded odd in the listening silence. She stopped her singing in the middle of a word and

shuddered. The moor was frightening, though she could not have told why—perhaps because it held such loneliness and mystery, perhaps because of odd sounds that came suddenly: whispers; far-off hoots; faint rustlings.

They jogged on. Now and then the way lightened as they came to a stretch of freshly budding heather. Suddenly a definite sound reached them. Her horse pricked up his ears and Elspeth caught her breath. They had come to a steep incline and she was walking beside the horse. A roar reached them, a deep, booming roar.

They came to the top of the incline and stood, both of them, trembling, uncertain. A dark hill frowned across from them, and down its sides in a wild white and rainbow torrent fell a waterfall. There was something savage, unearthly, menacing about its sudden unexpected beauty there in the starlit darkness.

Elspeth buried her face in the horse's neck. "It's only a waterfall!" she half sobbed, half laughed. Then, turning, she faced it, drinking in its terrible, lonely strangeness, and slowly she led her horse up the step hillside near it, glancing sideways furtively

at its gorgeous wild wonder, its terrific roar and spray.

When they reached the top of the hill they found themselves on a long, level stretch of moorland, and Elspeth urged her horse forward. It was rough and stubbly, strewn with rocks, and here and there an unexpected gleam of yellow betrayed some furze bush that, more energetic than its brothers, was budding early.

A hundred questions seemed to assail Elspeth. Were they on the right track? Had they lost their way? Was Moll Hall, that mysterious secret castle, really ahead of them, or were there only leagues of wasteland? Suddenly she drew rein, sitting motionless, listening with every fiber of her being. There were voices near her, behind a rock, and two faces came into view. One was that of Ian Campbell—again! Like a flash the little scene at Thistle Inn came back to her. More recent events—Cherry's arrival, her own departure, and her mission—had completely driven it from her memory. Now she remembered the words, "Moll Hall." At the time she had scarce attended to the words, but now they were significant. These two men, here alone and near the

castle—were they mayhap spies, waiting to aid and guide the enemy!

Elspeth's heart beat heavily. She felt a sudden faintness. They were close to a rowanberry hedge, and her horse made a sudden movement at sight of an overhanging branch. The slight sound made the men turn. The next second Elspeth had dug her heels into the horse's sides and he started off on a gallop. Something seemed to slide past them with a whizzing noise. Then closer still, another. A shot! Elspeth leaned forward, both arms around the horse's neck. "Sumach, Sumach, hurry on! It's for the Prince, Sumach darling!" she gasped. The shots had frightened Sumach and he increased his speed. He stumbled once, but did not throw Elspeth. She could hear the steady beat of horses' hoofs behind her, and again a shot came close, grazing the cape of her coat.

What was that little prayer of which Glen had reminded her—was it only two nights ago? A little prayer——

Golden stars, ask God for us to care
Here and now and everywhere!

She said the words suddenly out loud, and as Sumach staggered forward across the tangled, uneven bracken, the blackest of the fear seemed to lift, and suddenly like a fairy thing, a magical dream, an answered prayer, the gray turrets of Moll Hall shone like silver in the starlight. There was a blaze of light at the portal. Sumach reached it. Someone caught her as she fell. She heard the words, "It's a lass, a bit of a lass," and then for a few moments she heard nothing else.

Hot spiced wine and kindly faces, a room lighted dimly with flickering rushlights, a couch covered with rich velvet, a dog pushing his eager, inquiring nose into her face. These were the first things that Elspeth noticed as she came back to consciousness. She sat up at once, rubbing her eyes. They had taken off her cap, and her tangled hair fell in soft masses across her rough coat. There were burrs and bits of bracken in her hair, and she picked at them mechanically for a moment. Then she jumped up, calling out.

"Quick, there is danger! I'm come from Thistle Inn. There are spies about. There was a rumor that

you had been discovered here, and so I came, and—and—" She put her hand to her head a moment, and then, encouraged by the kindly concern in the eyes of the three Highland soldiers gathered about her, went on quickly: "Two men—they shot at me. It was after the waterfall. They gave chase. I escaped them."

One of the men leaned forward, his earnest eyes gleaming from under bushy brows. "How did you come, lass, alone through all this bleak way?" he asked and at Elspeth's answer a smile broke through his gravity.

"Hester sheltered me in her hut for the night, and brought me across the fields and told me how to come," she said, and an answering smile touched her quivering face when Hugh MacNeil said proudly, "Hester is my good wife."

"Then you are Hugh. You are close to the Prince. Oh, guard him, guard him! They were spies, those men. Don't you see, an army may be coming!" Her voice broke on a sob. Kindly hands aided her to a seat by a table, and kindly voices reassured her. "Here is Macrimmon, our piper, mistress." Hugh MacNeil put his arm on the shoulder of a short,

bronzed man in tartan, one of the three who had welcomed her, and young as she was Elspeth realized these men had bravery beyond any she had ever seen before. They were simple and friendly in the midst of grave peril. " 'Twas Macrimmon who made up the lament at— But hark!" The four men held their breath. There was a faint sound in the distance. Hugh called out, "Ho, Mark!" and a roughly clad orderly ran into the room. "Guard this young lady with your life. We three must away to the moor," and before Elspeth could say anything more the three had gone, running out into the blackness of the night.

Elspeth stood up, her unfastened cloak falling off her shoulders. There had been a few brief moments of terror when she and Sumach had felt the shots so near them, but they had been quickly over. This was different. It seemed as though for the first time since she had left the cozy warmth and friendliness of Lady McAllister's drawing-room, fear, stark, relentless and dominating, held her. The young Highland soldier stood motionless by the wide-open door, his long, shaggy hair falling about his listening, agonized face. Elspeth knew that it was taking all

his courage to obey Hugh MacNeil and stay there to guard her. She tried to speak, to urge him to follow the others. Words seemed to fail her.

"The Prince is in yon turret-room above with Lord George. Should the enemy steal a march, God hold wi' the Prince!" he muttered. Suddenly from out the purple blackness of the night came the sound of shots and cries. Elspeth stole closer to the soldier for protection. She was trembling so that she could scarcely stand, and she could not think of anything but the little "golden star" prayer. Had she after all come too late with her message? Were they—was the Prince—at the mercy of a great army, here in this lonely castle in the midst of wilderness?

The shouts and firing continued, and mingled with them was a heavy pounding sound which gradually grew fainter. The soldier stood eagerly listening, every muscle taut, and then, as he listened, he smiled; and to Elspeth his smile was as a golden beam of sunshine in the darkness.

"They're all riding away," he muttered. "They're riding away!"

"What do you mean?" breathed Elspeth.

"Hughie and Macrimmon and the other—they

fired shells, and yelled a while there in the dark, and they turned an army away! Cavalry, hark ye, lass!"

Something was coming toward them through the darkness. Two men walking slowly, two men who carried a third. The men were Hugh MacNeil and Andil, and the burden they carried was the body of Macrimmon, the piper!

Elspeth shrank back. The soldier silently aided his comrades. They placed Macrimmon's body on the couch. Then Hugh MacNeil turned, looking across at Elspeth.

"He made a song, a lament at Skye. It was his funeral hymn, lass," he said. Then looking down fondly at the piper's gentle face, he said, "Ye did the best of all of us for Charlie. Ye scared away an army and ye did it for him!" And Hugh knelt by the couch, sobbing.

CHAPTER XVIII

When Elspeth awoke the next morning she sat up and rubbed her eyes. Sunlight touched the silken hangings of the great four-poster bed in which she lay. It danced merrily over the rose brocade curtains at the casements, and convinced her that the morning was well advanced. A knock sounded at the door and a woman entered with a tray. She wore an apron over her gown and a white cap on her head, but one could tell at a glance that she was not a well-trained servant. She carried the tray awkwardly and there was the roughness of a peasant used to working in the open about her whole appearance.

"Good morning, mistress. Ah, you're a brave lass and God be with ye!" she ejaculated as she put the tray down on the bed beside Elspeth. "There is honor due ye in this house today, and from Hugh MacNeil to the bonny Prince himself there is praise for ye!" The peasant woman stood with her hands on her hips as she spoke, smiling down at Elspeth with whole-hearted admiration. At any other time

Elspeth would have gloried in the praise and would have thrilled at the thought of being regarded as a heroine, but just then she had no mind for anything but the drama of the night before. The violent scene had been so mysterious and terrible, and one of the actors—Macrimmon, the piper—at its end was lying dead in the hall below.

Elspeth disregarded the tray. She clasped her hands, looking up at the kindly peasant face above her. "Tell me, my good woman, and quickly, that all goes well with Prince Charlie," she besought. Nippie, for that was the peasant woman's name, beamed upon her. "Aye, lass, he's as bonny and brave as yesterday, and yet 'tis a sad heart in him. He's rare put about over Macrimmon the piper who made the lament song at Skye. Aye, and by afternoon this place will be again as empty as a washed acorn! But, come, lass—eat and drink." Nippie removed the cover from a blue and gold pot of steaming chocolate. "The bonny Charlie himself gave orders for this drink for you and he has but finished a cup of it. There is fresh-baked oatcake and a bit o' rasher. Come, lass, eat. Ye will have need o' food before the day is past."

Thus admonished, Elspeth drank her chocolate and partook hungrily of the oatcakes and bacon. There was even a dish of raspberry jam. Nippie watched her delightedly as she spread the jam on the crisp oatcakes and took big bites.

"This household was fine until two months ago," the woman went on. "His lordship was scared to keep his family here for they were strong for England and had no heart for Charlie. They fled across the border, and this whole place has come well for us. I'm cousin to Hester who sheltered you, and we all think the sun is ne'er so bright and none so brave as Charlie."

Elspeth listened to all the peasant woman said with interest and excitement. This great old place had not so long ago been full of life. Now it was deserted, a hiding-place for Prince Charlie, and from now on a marked place. It was indeed true that the afternoon would see them all beyond the shelter of its walls, but where?

"Nippie, the meal was wonderful. Now I would wash and dress. There is all the world outside to see. And, Nippie," Elspeth caught the peasant's arm, a dimple showing in her cheek, "do you think that I

may see the Prince?" Her lips trembled a little as she asked the question, and the color rushed to her cheeks at Nippie's answer.

"That ye will, lass, and proud he will be to see ye. And if ye fare to Edinburgh and Holyrood, lass, ye'll see my twin sister, Nettie."

A half-hour later Elspeth, clad in her warm woolen clothes, her hair neatly brushed, was slowly descending the wide stairway, her heart beating quickly. There was no one in the great hall below, and she crossed it, going through the open portal into the golden morning outside. Moorland everywhere, faint pink and scarlet showing through the brown, the sky a laughing blue. Elspeth drank in the fragrant sweetness all around her. She had slept the deep sleep of exhaustion, had breakfasted well, and now she was ready for all that might befall her. There was only one thought in her mind as she stood there in the sunshine. It thrilled her inexpressively. It seemed more wonderful than anything she had ever thought could happen. Prince Charlie was near, somewhere. She would see Prince Charlie!

She ran on over the bracken until she came to a soft hollow by a busy, winding stream. The wind

was gentle. She lay her head down on her folded arms, her brown hair tumbling about her face, and fell asleep. She awoke with a start, sitting up at once, and somehow before she knew it she was standing. Someone was near her, smiling at her there in the sunshine, a tall, broad-shouldered man in tartan, his bare knees as brown as the bracken. A plaid was thrown across his shoulder and fastened with a rosette of diamonds that blazed blue and scarlet in the clear light. His bronze-colored hair fell about his shoulders, and his smile seemed a part of the very sunshine itself. Prince Charlie!

They had practiced curtseys at Miss MacMasters' dame school. It had been a part of their training. Elspeth made as graceful a one as she could in her clumsy wool frock and coat. She shook the hair out of her eyes as she straightened herself, and then she smiled a little tremulously in answer to the Prince's smile.

"If I mistake not, you are Mistress Elspeth who has risked her sweet young life for mine, and therefore I am now and always her debtor." The Prince's voice was low and sweet, with a faint foreign accent. He seemed the embodiment of the moorland as he

stood there before her, bronzed and golden, free and buoyant.

Elspeth tried to answer but words failed her, and because she felt herself timid, tears came to her eyes. Then suddenly the wonder of it all swept over her. Her dream had come true. She was standing before Prince Charlie and he had said wonderful words to her. She was there in front of a strange old castle on a moor in the beloved Highlands, and the sun was shining!

It seemed indeed a dream as she found herself walking across the soft bracken, the Prince beside her. She found that she could speak easily and simply. She found that she was telling him of the house in Edinburgh, of the schoolroom, and the piper doll, of the stories and dreams which she and Glenfinnan had woven before the nursery fire. It was a half-hour that would always and forever be different from any other time that could come for her, as long as she should live.

"Then your summons came, and you answered it. You came away to danger. Why, Elspeth Craigie, why?" They stood on a knoll near Moll Hall and the moorland wind seemed to echo the Prince's ques-

tion. "Why, Elspeth Craigie, why?" Her answer came at once, spontaneously, joyfully, the dimples deepening in her cheeks, her eyes shining. "Why, for you, Sire, for your great cause!" she cried, and all the ardor of her glad sacrifice sounded in her voice.

Charles Stuart did not answer. He stood looking off across the wild, endless stretch of barren wasteland, its ruggedness faintly touched with the rose and amethyst of budding heather, and the sadness of his look seemed to typify all the world's sorrow. It was as though he were listening for the faint call of pipes that Cherry had heard. Then he turned to Elspeth, each word finding its way to her innermost thought, to be held forever in her soul.

"An eagle with bronze wings deeper than sunshine flew across as we landed at Loch Shiel. I am hard pressed now, failing—and the beauty of that omen has faded too." He smiled wistfully at Elspeth. Then he straightened himself, his head held high. "It prophesied one gold thing worth more than anything—your wonderful little self and your work for me." He took Elspeth's hand and kissed it, and at the moment a trumpet sounded from one of

the turrets of Moll Hall. The signal for their departure!

An hour later the great old castle was deserted. Elspeth, with Nippie on a stout horse beside her and an escort of two Highland soldiers, crossed the moors toward Hester's hut, the Prince, Hugh MacNeil and the four other men who guarded him having already left for the hills. They were safe within Hester's hut by nightfall, warmed by hot tea and food, and the ruddy cheer of a great turf fire, and Hester sat with locked hands and bowed head as Elspeth and Nippie told her of all that had befallen, of the death of brave Macrimmon, and of the Prince.

"Prince Charlie spoke with me. He said things I can never forget because of their wonder and their beauty." Elspeth knelt in the firelight with her arms around Hester. "Hugh, your husband, is safe and well. Thank God he was spared to you, Hester. He sent his love and he is proud of you." Elspeth spoke tremulously from her excitement and fatigue.

Hester stroked Elspeth's hair with her work-worn hands, and tears gleamed in her eyes. "Macrimmon, the piper," she repeated, "he who wrote the lament

for the Prince at Skye—Macrimmon, the piper, our old friend—gone!"

All through the week that followed, Elspeth lived over the strange lonely journey to Moll Hall, the happenings on the night of her arrival there, and the golden half hour on the moor with Prince Charlie. She hid the memory of it away in her heart to keep for always. Her orders had been to wait with Hester until further word was sent to her, and she did not find it irksome living there in the little hut with the peasant woman. Nippie's cottage was close by. It was oddly shaped and had a thatched roof that sloped down to the very top of the low doorway. Nippie tended her goats and brought Hester and Elspeth a brimming pail of goat's milk every night. They would sit around the fire telling tales of their childhood there on the bare moorlands, and Elspeth loved it all. She was content to rest in her memories, to wander over the budding moors, to learn to know Hester and Nippie.

The days went by until nearly a fortnight had passed. No news of any kind had come to them, and no one had passed by. At last a sense of restlessness and uneasiness came over Elspeth. Was she to live

forever there in the wastelands? Was there to be no other life than this for her? What was happening in the great world beyond?

"There's need for a wee bit more patience, little missy. These are darkish times and we must hold on," counseled Hester one morning as they stood outside of the hut. And Elspeth, remembering that Hugh MacNeil was with the Prince, answered bravely, "Yes, we must hold on." She had scarcely spoken the words before Hester exclaimed, "There's one riding this way." She shaded her eyes with her hand as she spoke, and the two of them stood straining their eyes toward something dark, moving toward them through the gay morning. Now and then it was hidden from view by rock or hillock, but at last they saw that it was a horse with a small figure astride it, and an instant later Elspeth called out joyously, "It's Cherry, at last. Good fortune—it's Cherry!" She ran forward to meet her and was greeted with, "Ho, Ellie!" as soon as they were within calling distance. A few minutes later they were breakfasting in the hut, Hester waiting on them and gazing with admiration and something like awe at Cherry, who looked as brown and neat and composed as ever, and who

ate heartily of the rashers and oatcakes. Elspeth exclaimed and questioned. Cherry listened intently to the recital of the events at Moll Hall, listened with a gravity so great that it seemed to fill and shadow the room.

Glenfinnan was well, she herself reported; Sir Hugh Roderick very feeble. Stragglers were everywhere about Thistle Inn. Men were returning sick for a sight of home. Starf and Glenfinnan were to leave in a few days on a scouting trip. There were enemies in high places both in Scotland and England. Their spies were about, but the peasantry all through the Highlands was staunch and true.

"There are clever hiding-places through the Nairn Valley and Stratherrick near Loch Neas. Lord Lovat's mountain stronghold lies high up in Gortuleg. There are means there for guarding the Prince."

Almost before she had finished speaking, Hester exclaimed, "God help us, my lady, that ever there should be need to seek hiding-places for his Royal Highness," and her dark face worked with a sudden emotion. Elspeth said only, "Cherry, Cherry!" They both stood silent before the fire.

Cherry went on with her breakfast. She gave

Hester a quick glance with her dark eyes. "You may have him with you here one day as your guest, Hester MacNeil, and nowhere would he find a more loyal welcome." She rose as she spoke. "I'll sleep for an hour or more, and then, Elspeth, we start together for Edinburgh," she said in her crisp way.

Edinburgh! Elspeth flushed with sudden joy and excitement. Edinburgh! Home! She stilled the eager questions on her lips, for Cherry had thrown herself on the couch and, as Hester covered her with a rough fur rug, seemed to fall instantly asleep. Edinburgh! The very name was thrilling. Elspeth ran across the moor a little way to Nippie's cottage and was cheered and encouraged by that kindly soul's interest.

Two hours later Fireloch and Sumach stood saddled at the gate and the two girls said goodbye to Hester and Nippie. "I shall never forget you, Hester, and perhaps I shall see you very soon again. We are real friends, always, aren't we?" Elspeth exclaimed, her arms around Hester's waist.

The good woman answered with tears, "There's always a place for you in my heart, little missy. God be with you!" Then, turning to Cherry, she curtseyed

deeply, saying, "There could be only one honor greater than having your ladyship under my roof, and that would be to guard Prince Charlie," she said simply.

"You are brave and wise and God be with you!" answered Cherry as she mounted Fireloch. The two girls turned in their saddles and waved at the wistful figures of Hester and Nippie who stood in the doorway of the hut, their hands shading their eyes.

So Cherry and Elspeth fared forth to Edinburgh that late March morning.

CHAPTER XIX

GRAYNESS everywhere, shadows lurking in dingy corners, rain falling steadily, unceasingly! This is what met Cherry and Elspeth as they rode into Edinburgh four nights later. Elspeth's eyes were tear-filled, her cheeks hot with anger. She rode silently beside Cherry. Their journey had been uneventful. They had taken the middle of the moorlands and though their way was rough, it had been safe. They had slept two nights among the rocks, and the third night were sheltered in a farmhouse at the edge of

the moor by people of Jacobite sympathies. It was here that Cherry had cut off all of Elspeth's hair and had helped her to attire herself in the garb of a peasant boy.

The last day had been long and trying. The rain had fallen relentlessly, coming down in torrents toward nightfall. It was as they neared the city and Elspeth's heart began to beat with excitement that Cherry said, "You could lodge in the hovel tonight, Ellie."

The hovel! Elspeth had turned to her in indignation. "You know well that I'll not do so, Cherry. I shall not put my foot inside that dirty place." She was very tired, and the shock of Cherry's words had been too much for her.

Cherry's voice had been kind when she replied, "Yes, it is but a poor shelter. However, there are only two safe places for you in Edinburgh—one is the hovel, the other Holyrood." How calmly Cherry spoke! How unemotional she was, and how exasperating. All day, deep in Elspeth's heart had been the thought that somehow she would see Charmaine and Hood and—happiest of thoughts—Lady McAllister.

They rode in silence—two young lads, apparently, jogging side by side. It was very dark as they rode on through the misty gray streets. Elspeth was blinded by tears. She longed to see the girls, Lady McAllister and the aunts, home, Cudsy, Bumble, the piper doll. Her longing was so great that it seemed for the moment unbearable.

They had by this time reached the towering portals of Holyrood. Cherry drew rein and gave her night-owl call. A moment later a door in the gate was opened and a woman stood looking out, blinking. Elspeth gave a little cry and leaned forward. "You are like Nippie. You are Nippie's twin!" she exclaimed, and all at once everything seemed much more bearable, as the woman with a broad smile answered, "Indeed, young lad, I am Nettie, twin to Nippie and at your service."

Cherry smiled, and turning to Elspeth reached over and put her arms about her, sudden tears in her eyes. "Dear, dear Ellie, I truly love you and may God guard you until we meet again! Nettie will shelter you until your orders come. It is not safe for me to be here in the city for an hour. As for you, mark me well, Ellie as you value the life and honor

of the Prince, do not show yourself to your friends. This is the hardest part of your service—silence and secrecy. It is best for you to stay secretly here at Holyrood. Your orders will come soon. Farewell!" And before Elspeth could cry out Cherry had touched her horse and was off, disappearing into the gray night.

"Cherry, Cherry!" Elspeth called, "Cherry, come back. Do not leave me like this," but only the wind answered her.

It was well for Elspeth that night that Nettie was so kindly. She was really the brighter of the two women and as brisk and neat a person as one could find anywhere. She lived quietly in three rooms in one of the towers, whither, after giving orders to a groom to take Sumach to the stables, she led Elspeth. A cheery fire was burning in one of the rooms, and she helped the girl remove her wet garments, then wrapped her in her own warm magenta dressing-gown, and finally brought her a supper of a grilled chop, bannocks and hot tea.

"This will hearten ye, lass, and a good rest will put things right. A fine talk we'll have on the morrow," she said cheerily as she bustled about the neat

little sitting-room. Elspeth smiled through her tears as she ate her chop.

"I am homesick for a sight of my own people and my friends. It was easier when I was in the moors, but it is dreadful now. I am not brave, like Cherry," Elspeth answered. But quite soon she felt more cheerful. She fell to playing with a little black kitten as she talked to Nettie. The woman was desperately eager for news of her twin and of Hester, Moll Hall, Macrimmon, and Prince Charlie. It was midnight before Elspeth had satisfied her, but, tired though she was, she realized how much it was meaning to the faithful woman to hear news of her own and of the moorland home she so loved.

"They sent for me before the army came and I've maybe helped some here. Now all the army has gone and the city is as dull as a funeral. But the yellow-haired laddie will win through. Charlie will come back," Nettie said, wiping the tears from her eyes as she turned down Elspeth's bed. "Her young ladyship I have known always, and no man in the army has a braver heart. God guard her! Me and mine have served Sir Hugh Roderick's family and his forebears for many a year. Now rest ye well, little

missy, rest ye well!" Elspeth, already half asleep, hardly heard the last words.

For two days she stayed quietly with Nettie, grateful for rest and safety. The third day was one of sunshine. April had come and the air was suddenly balmy and soft. At breakfast Elspeth shyly broached the subject of going out. She was dressed in her peasant boy's attire, her short brown hair hardly browner than her wind-blown cheeks. "I'd like it well to walk through the town today, Nettie. No one could ever know me," she ventured.

Nettie's face grew a shade redder in her anxiety. She stood with her hands on her hips, concern in her eyes. "Well, well, lassie, I don't best ken what to tell ye. Mayhap there's no danger at all, and mayhap it's at every street corner. They are canny and quiet, these men of the King of England, and they have many spies; but I see no real danger for ye, and it's fair wrong to keep ye all day in these wee rooms," she said. A half-hour later, Elspeth bade her goodbye.

"I hope you will not be out after sundown, missy." Nettie hesitated, then went on speaking so earnestly

that Elspeth felt a little uneasy. "Should you not return, should there be danger today or any day for you, remember that I will away to Thistle Inn for help," she ended, and Elspeth gave the honest woman an impulsive hug as she went out.

It was a magical day. Sunshine gilded the gray roofs of the city, and turned golden the muddy lochs outside it. No one in all the town would recognize the brown-faced lad as Elspeth Craigie, and she would be able to go where she liked and without being recognized; see those whom she loved, and who would have given much to see her. It was a thrilling thought, a wonderful one, but it would take courage to carry it out!

She sauntered slowly toward Nor' Loch, and stood idly, her hands in the pockets of the rough peasant jacket, gazing off across its brown depths to the rocks beyond it where Edinburgh castle stood proudly. The life of the city seemed to flow on as quietly as the winding streams. All the red and gold was gone. There was no longer the sound of the bagpipes, no tartan plaid moving in the breeze, no sign of Prince Charlie and his army. The city went its monotonous

way, pausing now and then a little wistfully as though waiting for the return of some of its lost glory.

Elspeth stood still in the sunshine, trying to realize that this was the city that had stirred into gayety such a little time before.

Suddenly the wonder of the life she had lived for the past months came over her. She had had dangerous journeys and narrow escapes; had seen sacrifice and the breathless devotion of a people to a cause. Suddenly she took off her cap and, throwing it high in the air, caught it again. Inspiration touched her. She was in the midst of high adventure here in her city that had returned to its dullness. Danger was all about them, high risks and endeavors, armies hiding, a price on Prince Charlie's head. She knew. She was helping. She was suffering. It was better so.

She made her way slowly along the banks of the muddy loch, her eyes on the grand towering castle above her. Then she turned to the right and began to ascend the hill which would take her to her uncle's house. Nettie had given her an apple and a packet of sandwiches for her lunch. She drew the apple from the baggy pocket of her rough jacket and ate

it as she climbed the hill, the noise and dirt of the lower streets all about her. No one noticed her and she realized that her disguise was excellent. She had grown taller and very thin during the six months on the moors. Her face was deeply browned by wind and storm, and her short hair changed her whole appearance. She whistled as she walked. It was great fun being out on the streets in disguise! She reached the portals of her uncle's house. The garden door was open. She went inside. Thady Boy was running about. He saw her, came up to her wagging his tail uncertainly. She longed to lift him up and hug him, but she went on across the garden, eating the apple. The hawthorn tree was budding—there was a faint film of rose over it. April snowdrops bloomed under the kitchen windows, and the wall flowers were in bud.

Someone came to the open kitchen window and looked out. It was Cudsy. She laid a platter of treacle tarts near the sill and stood for a moment, her hand on her hips, looking out. Elspeth slipped behind an elderberry bush. She dared not risk Cudsy's seeing her. If there was one person in all the city likely to penetrate her disguise, it was Cudsy.

She waited until the good woman had turned away, and then quickly and silently she crept to the sill, put three of the tarts in her pocket, and turned away. Her impulse to leave some message on the window-sill was so strong that it made her feel a little faint. She went slowly across the garden and out of the low door. As she walked again through the streets she realized that this was the hardest task that had been set her since she had pledged herself to the Prince's cause. She was alone in her city and she could not by look or word make herself known to those she loved most.

Suddenly she stood still, her thoughts in a whirl. Lady McAllister, her beloved Lady McAllister, was also pledged to the Prince's cause, so would it not be safe to go to her? Lady McAllister, her dear friend, of whom she had had no word for so long. A great sense of cheer and comfort swept over Elspeth. She turned her steps in the direction of that part of the city where Lady McAllister lived, and before long found herself in front of the stately house. After clanging the bronze knocker on the wide door she waited impatiently until it was opened for her by a manservant. He stared at the brown-faced peasant

boy who looked so eagerly up at him. "I would see Lady McAllister, if you please," Elspeth said.

The manservant only stared. "Her ladyship has gone away, and is not expected back for some time," and with these words he slammed the door upon Elspeth. Though she banged at the knocker and even pounded the door with her fists and shouted, he did not come back again.

Elspeth turned away, disheartened, the tears brimming in her eyes. She was lonely with a sort of loneliness that terrified her. She had never felt anything like it on the moor, even when she had ridden all that long day alone toward Moll Hall. Here, in the midst of the city she loved, with all that had been dear to her in the past, she seemed lost and friendless. She walked on toward the Boomer mansion, eating one of the tarts slowly. How good they were, how sticky and crumby and delicious! They brought back memories of nursery parties and schoolroom feasts—of Glenfinnan. Elspeth thought of that last night at Thistle Inn and of Glenfinnan's strong eager face with something older and different about it. No other time in all her long friendship with Glen had held so much of friendliness and understanding.

Glen—she wanted to be off on the moors with him. She wanted action and excitement, not this drab city with all its glory gone. She knew deep in her heart that what she wanted most of all was to tell her adventures to Hood and Charmaine, to sit sprawled in front of the Boomer schoolroom fire and make toffy and talk and laugh and plan and joke. She wanted to thrill them with her escape on the way to Moll Hall, to tell them with her own lips how the three faithful soldiers of Prince Charlie had scared away an army with their shots and shouting there in the darkness, to touch them with the glory of the piper Macrimmon's death. Instead, she could only stand looking wistfully up at the schoolroom window in the Boomer house. Someone was standing at the window, one of the twins. She was waving, calling down to someone below. Elspeth turned, a piece of treacle tart still in her hand, and then for a moment she felt as though her heart would burst, for Hood and Lillias had come around the corner. They were accompanied by a maid and they carried their school bags on their arms. Hood was chatting.

"Miss MacMasters gave me five strokes with her

ruler because I forgot all about rewriting my composition. She is a mean beast and I loathe her!"

"Hush, Hood, what language!" admonished Lillias.

They both passed close to Elspeth and Hood looked up at her. Like Thady Boy she paused uncertainly.

The temptation to call out to Hood was perhaps the greatest that Elspeth had ever known. She looked away unconcernedly, and sauntered off down the street, finishing the last tart with a big bite.

Hood stood by the open portal staring after her. "Lil, mind what I say. Wait for me. That lad that passed had eyes like Ellie's—honest gray eyes. Lil, Lil!" Hood caught her sister's arm as they ascended the house steps together. "Where is Ellie? Where and when will we see her again?"

Elspeth was tired. It was nearly the middle of the afternoon and she decided to go back to Nettie. A cup of tea and a chat with her would go a little way toward comforting her. She quickened her steps until at last she was in the shadow of Holyrood itself. The place had long ago lost its ancient glory. Once, lately, it had awakened to such light and life

and gayety as it had not known since Mary Queen of Scots and her gay French friends had come over to enliven it—but it had awakened only briefly. Now it was only a shadow again. A sob rose to Elspeth's throat, and as she stood there in the early April twilight she breathed the "golden star" prayer. It was so majestic, this Holyrood, a fit setting for the "yellow-haired laddie" whose future was so uncertain, whose danger was so great.

As she walked along close to the door in the wall that would let her into the palace court, she heard men's voices. They were standing near the orchard doorway. With a sudden interest Elspeth stepped quickly inside. They had not seen her—she was sure of that. They were richly dressed, one in blue and the other in green velvet, with white wigs showing under plumed hats. Some words of Cherry's came to her: "There are Whig spies everywhere." There was only one thing to do and that was to listen with all her heart and soul.

"It was a mad chase for the young lad, but they caught him. He and his horse seemed like quicksilver. Well, he's a safe prisoner now, but there is still the other lad to catch, the one who rode through

to Edinburgh with him. I saw them both plainly as they rode through the town, and though I gave them chase, I lost them. Later on we can get the small brown lad. There is a peasant woman in the turret rooms. We'll question her. It may be she can give us a clue."

Elspeth raised her eyes to the turret windows and there saw Nettie looking down, her ruddy face ashen, her eyes wild. Before Elspeth could breathe or move or think the two men turned and faced her. "God's truth, here is the other lad, the one with brown locks and peasant garb! So, my fine fellow, we have caught you easily," and the man laid his hand on Elspeth's shoulder. "I arrest you in the name of the King of England!"

CHAPTER XX

GLENFINNAN was speaking to his horse softly and firmly. "You are a good lad, Roderick, well named." He leaned his head wearily against the animal's neck, and stood so, silently, for a moment. "We failed, Roddy," he said, softly, and then with a sigh, he mounted and drew rein.

A whole Highland army had blundered. Glenfinnan's hand tightened on the reins. Suddenly tears washed his cheeks. He put his arm to his face and wiped them away, fiercely, his cheeks hot with shame. He sat his horse quietly for some moments, looking off across a great mound of crags to the moorland beyond. As far as he could see were sweeps of purple and pink, gold and amethyst. April sunshine had hastened the blossoming of gorse and heather, and there was something almost terrifying in the beauty everywhere. Glenfinnan scarcely noticed it. His nerves were taut, and his head felt a little light. He was living through the blackest minutes of his life as he sat on Roderick's back, facing the enchanting moorlands.

A whole army had blundered. There was not an event in the past week since Elspeth's departure that had so terrified and dismayed the inmates of Thistle Inn and the neighboring Highland folk as had this last devastating news. Their army had become confused; even their bravest and most trustworthy men, those who led and planned and directed, had blundered. The army of the Duke of Cumberland had left Aberdeen with nine thousand troopers, to form camp at Nairn, fifteen miles from Prince Charlie and his army.

A voice calling made Glenfinnan turn in his saddle, his hand on his sword. Max came riding from behind a rock at the side of the winding road, and as always at the sight of him Glenfinnan felt reassured and comforted. During the week he had spent in and around Thistle Inn he had seen little of Max, who had been rounding up men through the glens. Glenfinnan and Starf had explored every nook and corner, inlet and crevice, in and around the rocks, and had rowed on the lochs and roamed through the wild islands scattered among them. Then at the beginning of the second week a message had come for them to join the army. It had reached them just

after Cherry had started North to Hester's hut, for Elspeth.

Swift riding for two days and nights had brought them to the outposts of the Highland army, where no good news awaited them. The net was closing around the Prince. There was still breathing space before the arrival of Cumberland's army, which had barely left Perth. Loch Shiel and Kipproch, Highland chiefs, the former a kinsman of Glenfinnan, had taken Fort Augustus Cluny, and Lord George had captured thirty government posts; but they had had to give up the siege of Blair Castle and flee to the North because of the advance of the English army from Perth.

Max drew rein beside Glenfinnan and for a moment their horses stood side by side. Then they rode slowly on, going single file down a steep incline until they came to a sheltered valley, where, as far as one could see, lay the Highland camp. Smoke from fires here and there rose straight toward a blue and cloudless sky.

"Fair weather," commented Max in his bluff way, as he came up to Glenfinnan.

But the latter could think of nothing but that the

army had blundered. He turned impulsively toward his friend. "It would drive me mad if I thought too much about it, Max. We were within eight miles. There was a heavy storm. We knew every step of the way through the mountains. Cumberland and his men were drunk, and had no suspicion of our attack. Yet we failed; the whole army showed itself to be stupid and bungling. We had a great chance—it might have been the turning point. We had it, and we lost it. Tell me, Max, tell me, does it mean the end?"

Glenfinnan turned his gaze full upon the grizzled giant who had stood by him so long. There was something touching in Glenfinnan's confidence that brought a lump to Max's throat.

"I'd not be the one to say, but the Prince is fair broken-hearted. There was a reason, laddie, for the bungling and the delay. They were rounding up the men, aye, and it's bitter work with deserters and spies everywhere," said Max. "There is a man who would well have speech with us, laddie, one of our own spies newly come from Edinburgh. We are to find him yonder." Max spoke seriously, and they both urged their horses forward. A few minutes

later they were standing in the shadow of a rock near a hazel tree, greeting a tired Highlander disguised as a peasant who had ridden from Edinburgh, a weary four days' journey, and who had an air of bringing ill news. He held a canteen of ale in one hand and a piece of bread in the other, and between gulps and bites he told them that which seemed to still their very heart-beats.

Cumberland's moor spies had lost track of "the young lads" who had crossed the moors from Thistle Inn. Later, through a city spy, they traced them to Holyrood, and caught Cherry on the outskirts of the town. They arrested Elspeth the very next day in the very doorway beside the Holyrood gate. She was a prisoner there now, in the ruined abbey.

The world seemed to spin before Glenfinnan's eyes. He stood quietly, one hand on Roderick's neck. He had turned so white through his tan that Max instinctively came closer to him. The messenger twisted his farmer's hat in his hands.

"I've orders for Thistle Inn. I go at once," he said. "I—" his words were interrupted by a strange sound, a muffled muttering that increased to a confused roar. Two Highlanders running toward them

shouted hoarsely, "Cumberland advances! Call to arms!"

Glenfinnan and Max mounted their horses like a flash. The former leaned forward and addressed the messenger. "Take the news of the arrest of my cousin and Cherry to Thistle Inn. Tell Sir Hugh Roderick's nephew that he is to fare straight to Edinburgh. He must aid them!"

There was no time for more. They galloped off to the column to which they had already been assigned. Glenfinnan heard Max's gruff voice beside him as in a dream. What was it he was saying? "We're Scotch, laddie." What an odd thing to say! Of course they were Scotch. They were riding on to fight for Scotland and the "yellow-haired laddie." One day he would be King. Rain blew in their faces, driving sweet rain. Scottish skies were weeping. It was the sixteenth day of April. It seemed as though all of Scotland must be with them, waiting and praying.

Max rode close to Glenfinnan. When the order came to halt they were on a knoll and the whole bewildering mass of men—infantry and cavalry—was spread out before them. They faced an open moor-

land plateau, and now and then a sweep of heather showed through the steady silver slant of rain. The Highlanders made a scarlet and black and white checkerboard in two lines. Beyond them the rain showed glimpses of the river Nairn. The old guard of Highland Jacobite were massed together, the Attrolls, and the Camerons, the Appin Stuarts, Maclachlans, Frasers, Mackintoshes, Macleans, and Macleods, the Chisholms, and the Macdonalds of Clanronald Keppoch and Glengarry.

"There's but a thin reserve of Lord Ogilvy's men behind the Prince."

The Prince! Glenfinnan turned at Max's last words, straining his eyes wistfully. A French soldier rode up to them and saluted. "There might have been a way to retreat to the hills. God knows what will come of it! Our ambassador has entreated the Prince, but they say it is too late."

Too late! Glenfinnan raised his head proudly, his eyes on the young French soldier. "It is never too late for us of the Highlands. We do not retreat," he said hotly, and Max smiled in spite of himself. He saw Glenfinnan for a moment through a blur of tears. Was this the end of all for them? What dis-

aster awaited? The swirling rain and cloud-hidden mountain gave no answer; but the crystal sound of a trumpet and, far off, the black masses of Cumberland's army were his reply. He turned to Glenfinnan, speaking quickly, and—even in this supreme moment of excitement—Glenfinnan noticed the deep, sweet seriousness of his tone. "Whatever prayer comes to your heart, laddie, hold it fast the whiles," he said and with these words they started forward.

'Twas on a Monday morning,
Right early in the year,
That Charlie came to our town,
The young Chevalier.
Oh, Charlie is my darling—
The young Chevalier!

The words of the song that Elspeth loved and sang at Thistle Inn seemed to pound in Glenfinnan's head as he went forward. Suddenly it seemed as though the earth and sky had opened and swallowed all the world around him. There was noise and rocking, confusion, the thunder of the English cannon. Twenty minutes—only twenty minutes, and Culloden, one of the cruelest battles in history, had been

fought. Twenty minutes for the English cannon to mow down lines of men—twenty minutes for English bayonets to cut their way through the first Highland army and against a staunch resistance.

Charlie is my darling—
The young Chevalier;

Somewhere, somehow, the words said themselves over and over and over to Glenfinnan. Then a long silence. Then the song again. Then blackness.

He seemed to awaken suddenly and to be conscious at once of his surroundings. He felt the motion of Roderick's body under him. He seemed to be lying crosswise, and someone was holding his head. He knew before he heard the voice that it was Max. "Rest, laddie. Your Roddy is a very good horse," he said. Glenfinnan did not reply. Now and then when he opened his eyes he saw a flash of silver that was the river Nairn, and patches of rose and gold that were heather and gorse. All around him, behind and before, were pounding horses' hoofs and vaguely murmuring voices.

He roused himself at last and with Max's help sat up, swinging one leg over his horse's back, hold-

ing on to Max's arm for support. Things began to take more definite shape. He saw the swing of kilts about him, men carrying litters of the wounded. It was nearly dark, and the rain had ceased.

"What was it, Max?" he asked, stupidly, blinking as though the light hurt him. Max helped him with one arm as he answered. "You were stunned, lad, that is all. A stampede went by, but you and Roddy and my horse and I weren't caught in it. We are on our way through the Nairn Valley, taking the Prince to the Fort Faillie. A group of Lowland gentlemen on horses are guarding him not more than three hundred yards ahead." Max gave a great sob as he ended. It told Glenfinnan much that he dared not ask. Max was stammering out the awful truth. "We are overwhelmed, beaten. Hundreds of our soldiers are killed, and hundreds have fled. I pray, laddie, they fall not into the hands of Cumberland's men. The Prince is flying for his life."

Max's words seemed to trail off into the blackness of the night. Glenfinnan slept by his friend's side in the damp chill of a rocky cave on the far side of Fort Faillie. The Prince and his men had gone on into the depths of the farthest moorlands. The whole world

seemed to be standing still, but in spite of Glenfinnan's heartache and his fear for Elspeth, he slept the sleep of exhaustion.

Before they slept, Max had talked to him gently, kindly, almost as a mother might have talked to a child. There was no comfort he could offer to the heartsick great-grandson of Malcolm of Lock Shiel, who had dared so much and was so young, but there was great pride in his voice and it echoed in Glenfinnan's heart as he fell asleep.

"They were the bravest in all the world today, laddie, the Macdonalds and Macleans and the Appin Stuarts. Through all the length and breath of the world there never were and never will be any braver. The cause is lost, and Charlie is fled. But there was a new star in the sky on the night that he was born in Rome, they say, so mayhap some day yet he will come into his own!"

"They were the bravest in all the world, today, laddie." These were the last words Glenfinnan remembered as he fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXI

THE rooms were so tiny, and there were so many of them. They seemed to stretch on like endless vistas. They were the monks' cells in the abbey, and in the six days that Elspeth had lived in them, she had grown to know each one of them. She could wander through them as much as she liked, but the arched doors at each end were strongly bolted. An old man, clad in brown, who always bowed respectfully, brought her a tray of food three times a day. The food, though plain, was good, and at night there was always a goblet of milk with it. The old man only mumbled when Elspeth plied him with

eager questions, but he seemed kindly and one day brought her an armful of books.

The days had passed slowly. The fourth day brought leaden skies and rain. Elspeth could hear it pounding against the worn stone sides of the ancient ruin. She rose wearily from her cot, threw back the warm blanket that covered it and walked restlessly up and down the tiny room. A bolt was drawn at the end of the long dim corridor into which the monks' cells opened. The heavy door opened and shut with a heavy thud and the old man, who had said his name was Stevie, shuffled in. He carried the tray carefully and set it down on a small table near the cot. It was covered with a white cloth and held a steaming pot of coffee, a dish of kidneys and eggs, and half a loaf of bread on a blue plate. He was near-sighted and blinked in an odd way that fascinated Elspeth. She felt less frightened and lonely always when he came in, but he never vouchsafed any remarks and he seemed impervious to any of her coaxing ways.

"Stevie, I am right glad you have come this dreary morning. Please, please speak to me. Say something, anything. Tell me the news. What has come

through from the front? What word is passed in the city squares? Speak, Stevie, I pray you." There were tears in Elspeth's eyes.

Old Stevie only smiled with his pale blue eyes, shook his head, and turned away.

"You are a cruel-hearted man," she called after him, her voice choking on the words. She heard him shuffling, heard the door open and shut, and then heard the bolt drawn.

She sat with her head in her hands, tears trickling through her fingers, her short hair falling about her cheeks. She sat so for some time. Finally she wiped her eyes with the sleeve of her jacket and poured herself a cup of coffee. It was still hot and she drank it eagerly. Then she ate the kidneys and eggs and a large slice of bread and butter. After all, she thought, we must eat!

She was about to cut a second slice when she noticed a piece of something like a thin board sticking out from under the loaf along the bottom of the plate. She drew it out carefully and saw to her astonishment that there were letters carved on it. She lifted it to the light, but was unable to decipher the words; they seemed to be cut in with a knife.

She ran swiftly through the long, dim corridor to the end, where she knew there was more light. She stood close under the skylight in the musty little room, and with trembling hands and eager eyes that widened in astonishment, read slowly and with difficulty the words carved there.

When midnight strikes tonight climb the chest in end cell and out of skylight. You can get through sidewise. Once on roof wait for me.

CHERRY.

Elspeth read the note over and over. She was shaking from head to foot, partly from nervousness and partly from the cold, for a chill wind blew in from the skylight. She raised her eyes to it. She had looked at it before, but the thought of trying to climb out of it had seemed too wildly improbable even to consider. She had never dreamt that there was anything outside of it but a sheer drop to the court below. Then her heart beat with a sudden wild excitement. She had stood in the shadowy courtyard one day with Glenfinnan. She remembered that vast sweep of roofs and turrets that spread and rose and

sloped in all directions, towering above them. Could it be that the ruined abbey was part of them, its frail network of half-falling stone connected with the great vast heights that were Holyrood?

She walked back to her cell in a sort of dream, poured herself a cup of coffee and ate a large slice of bread and butter. She was so excited that she danced up and down the corridor for some time. She felt that she could not keep still, that the day would be longer than a year. It wore away somehow and she read a chapter in one of the books which old Stevie had given her. It was not interesting, and Elspeth wandered restlessly up and down the room all afternoon, pausing often under the skylight.

Old Stevie came in with her supper at eight. She heard the castle clock strike the hour a few minutes before his arrival. He put the tray down and shuffled away without a word and she did not speak to him except to wish him a good evening. Where was Cherry? How could she know about the skylight? How could she reach her on the roof? What did it all mean? It was always Cherry who knew, always Cherry who did things. After all, she, Elspeth, was only a stupid clumsy girl, willing and

ready, but just a schoolroom girl, a home girl without power of quick planning or clear guessing, without any unusual intuition. Cherry had all of these, yet how little they had realized or appreciated it! As she sat there in the deepening dusk, Elspeth made a vow that if it should really come to pass that she could escape from her prison that night, and meet Cherry on the roof, their friendship would be one of the most wonderful things in all her life.

The palace clock struck eleven, then the half-hour. Stevie had left a rushlight, as always, by the door in the end hall. Elspeth lifted her heavy coat from the end of the cot where it had lain since her arrival. Then she threw it down. She could not get through the skylight if she wore it. Warmer weather had come, and she must do without it. She waited quietly, sitting on the edge of the cot, her hands clasped before her, until at last the twelve strokes of midnight fell upon her ears. Then swiftly and silently she ran through to the end hall, climbed the chest and stood for a moment, her arms across her eyes.

Suppose it hadn't been Cherry at all who had carved the letters? Suppose she was mistaken about the skylight opening on the roof? What if she could

not get through it? She said a little prayer to herself, quickly. Then she jumped up on the chest, found that she could reach her arms on the ledge. She pulled herself up with a great effort and as she turned sidewise saw with a great throb of relief that a roof stretched out in front of her. It was very slow work getting through. She blessed Thistle Inn and its maple trees. The exercise and the worry and fear of the past days had made her thin and wiry. She managed to squeeze herself through and next moment had her feet firmly on the roof and was holding on to the outside of the ledge with all her might.

"Well done, Ellie. Rest a moment. That's it—take my arm." Cherry's voice sounded close by, and an arm had been extended to Elspeth. After a minute or so the two made their way slowly and silently along the wide roof.

"This is where the palace part begins. Go carefully. Accustom yourself to looking about. Do not be afraid to look down."

Elspeth did not answer for a moment, but only squeezed Cherry's arm. Then she exclaimed softly, "Oh, Cherry!" There was nothing else that she felt she could say, just then.

Cherry was calm, as always. She straightened herself and stood looking quickly and intently about. There was no sound except the twitter of returned swallows in their newly made nests in a nearby chimney. "I've been out here several times. My cell was the other side of the end hall and it, too, had a skylight. I saw yours from the roof when I was out here. I heard them bring you in but they took you farther on. I dared not call to you because of old Stevie prowling about, and I did not know just where you were. I saw that Stevie was near-sighted and I trusted to your seeing the board under the bread. We must climb now, Ellie. Follow me."

An instant later Cherry was making slow progress up the sloping side of a roof. Elspeth followed her along the rough boards. They reached the top without slipping, high up among the turrets of wonderful old Holyrood, on a dark, moonless night.

Elspeth was used to climbing, and once safely on the top she threw her arms about Cherry. "Oh, Cherry, Cherry, how clever you are, and how stupid I am! We are free here on the tip-top of the world. See!" she pointed to a space of light far below. "There, look, that flare of lights goes up the hill

toward the Boomers'. Cherry, Cherry, three awful days, and now this glory up here with you!" Elspeth spoke eagerly, hysterically, a sob in her voice.

Cherry made no reply, but only smiled one of her rare smiles; then, taking Elspeth's arm, turned toward the shadows about a broad chimney. "Let us sit here, Ellie," she said. After they were seated and Cherry had put her cloak about the two of them, she said quietly. "We are in danger, Ellie, but I know how you feel about being free. We must somehow reach the ground tonight. We must find Sumach and Fireloch—they are our only chance. I see no other way of escape. Nettie has gone. She took one of the horses and rode off that very night. She will have made straight for the moors and Thistle Inn to get help for us. Now we must help ourselves. The stable door opens back onto an alley. There is a low fence there leading to a back road. Somehow we must get our horses tonight."

It all seemed unreal, fantastic, those past three days. Cherry sat there so quietly. Far below them lay the court and stables. The night seemed suddenly bleak and fearsome. Elspeth moved closer to Cherry and took her hand. "Let us talk just a little

while, can't we, Cherry?" she asked with a quiver in her voice.

Cherry nodded. She was as composed as ever, but Elspeth could see in the wan light that her face was set in anxious lines, and when she spoke it was slowly, hesitatingly, in a different tone from her usual crisp confidence. "We are needed now as never before. The Prince and the Duke of Perth blundered in an attack on Cumberland's army. They could not gather our men together in time. That is all I know, but I feel sure Cumberland's army has made an attack somewhere beyond the Nairn Valley. I dare not think." Cherry put her head down on her arm, just an instant. Then she rose to her feet, and as Elspeth sprang up, put both her arms on her shoulders.

"Such a different life yours has been from mine, Ellie. Such a different life it will be." She gazed off to the drab city below and watched the lights blaze across the sky. "It is a silly thing to say when we are here and in danger, but—" she caught her breath with a little sob, "I've thought that mayhap if ever Charlie came to be Prince and ruled at Holyrood, my father and I would come to do him honor, and I

could have worn my red velvet and my rubies! Now, that will never be. I shall live and die at Thistle Inn." She gave a little laugh and dropping her hands from Elspeth's shoulders, "That is, if I live at all to reach it! But come, Ellie, no more nonsense. We are not yet out of old Stevie's clutches. Listen well," she went on, disregarding the tears on Elspeth's cheeks. "There is a solid wall of ivy at the far end of the palace. It is our only chance. Ivy is as strong as iron. Please God it will hold. We must climb down and steal away."

Elspeth clasped her arm. She had always been afraid of heights. "I dare not, Cherry. My courage seems to go. How can I climb? I might look down and be dizzy."

Cherry faced her sternly. "I will strike you if you say such stupid things again, Elspeth Craigie. I will slap you across the face." Her eyes flashed fire. The hot blood rushed to Elspeth's cheeks, and she raised her head a little proudly. "I am ready," she said, and without further word turned, walking slowly and carefully over the uneven, rough roof. Cherry followed her.

It seemed an endless journey. Twice they had to

traverse a narrow ledge that led them to another roof, and once they had to climb the steep, rough side of an arched projection, but there were rough crevices and bits of stone to help them. Finally they reached the high upper part of the last roof.

"The ivy is here at this end. I will go first. You must not come until I am down. Then, if you listen you will hear my call. It is very still tonight." Cherry spoke as unconcernedly as though she were placing a midnight banquet at Thistle Inn. She gave Elspeth a swift smile, waved her hand, and then turned, both hands on the ledge of the roof, her feet on the ivy. Then she disappeared.

"Ivy is strong. Ivy is strong. Ivy is like iron. One can climb up and down it. Cherry is light and nimble and cool-headed and clever. Cherry is like a monkey for climbing. Ivy is strong." Such thoughts rushed through Elspeth's mind as she stood tensely in the silent night.

She thought she heard the rustle and crackle of the ivy, but she was not sure. Her mouth was dry, and she could feel a throbbing in her ears. It seemed to her that she had always stood there in the wild, blue-black night above the secret dimness of the

abbey; as if somehow Mary Queen of Scots and others of Prince Charlie's ancestors were very close to her, tenderly and wonderingly watching her. The fancy gave her strength. Then suddenly far away, from far down below, there came through the stillness and the blackness the cry of a night-owl.

Elspeth turned, caught the ledge, felt the ivy below her and slowly started her descent. It was easier than she thought. The ivy held. It gave her a certain confidence. There was something so strong and reliable about it. Down, down, down, she went, slowly, then quickly, too quickly. She swayed a little, and in one place the ivy slipped and she slipped with it. Once, too, she looked downward and for a moment the dark, tender leaves swam before her eyes, but she went on down, down. She felt that Cherry would speak when she was nearly to the court. Again the night-owl hooted softly. She dared to turn and look down. Cherry was beside her, had caught her and for a moment held her. "This way," she whispered, and they found themselves at the stable door.

Elspeth's knees were shaking, her heart pounding. She would have exclaimed softly over the wonder of

what they had done, but Cherry seemed to have forgotten it. Her whole mind was on their next move. "We must find horses at all costs," she said under her breath. She had known the stables well, and she had twice seen grooms throw the heavy door keys on a shelf. Ten minutes later they stood breathlessly in the dark, ill-smelling stables, having climbed in easily through an open window. It was some time before Cherry found the shelf. At last she called softly through the darkness, "They're here!" Then she worked quietly and painstakingly to unlock the great doors. Elspeth stood impatiently beside her. Would they never give? The great key was rusty, and the doors swollen; and very slowly, both of them pulling at once, the doors opened. A glimmer of light shone through.

"It is indeed fortunate for us that the army horses have gone," whispered Cherry with a shrug. Then she called softly, "Fireloch," and a whinny answered her. The two horses were tethered in stalls next to each other, and it was the work of only a moment to unfasten them. When the doors were opened they creaked loudly.

"Mount quickly," breathed Cherry. A moment

later they were off, Sumach and Fireloch keeping pace together. Swiftly as a well-aimed arrow the two horses shot through the sweeping city toward the moors and freedom.

CHAPTER XXII

"Don't you know that there is nothing in the world for me now but to find Elspeth? Do you not realize that she is a prisoner in Edinburgh?" Glenfinnan spoke angrily to faithful Max. They were riding out of the Nairn Valley in the golden radiance of sunset. Ahead were some twenty horsemen, and among them the Prince. High above was a range of hills running parallel with the wide, smiling, sapphire blue of Loch Neas.

Max said nothing for a moment. Then he answered in his bluff way, "There is but one thing in the world for you to do, laddie. It is to obey."

Glenfinnan interrupted eagerly. "I can go to the Prince and tell him of my little cousin Ellie. It may be that he met and talked with her at Moll Hall. He owes her much for her warning to them all. I will say that she is a prisoner in Edinburgh and that with his gracious permission I will go to find and rescue her." Glenfinnan turned facing Max, but that stolid

man showed no sign of changing his opinion. He shook his head dubiously.

"That would indeed be foolhardy, and of little account. The Prince no doubt would give ye leave to go, but ye would be deserting him in his hour of great peril, for it is beyond anything ye ken, laddie, the peril for the Prince."

The Prince and Ellie, each so beloved, each so dear, each in peril! Glenfinnan, sad beyond the sadness of youth, gazed straight before him at the scarlet and black and white figures ascending the narrow mountain road. Suddenly his face lighted. He turned to Max, speaking quickly. "I was one of those chosen to come here with the Prince, I, only a lad. That is great, a wonderful thing, isn't it, Max?"

Max smiled slowly. "It is that, Master Glenfinnan," he answered.

The sunset had paled. Soft, mist-like clouds veiled the gold and gave an eerie dimness to the green stretch and to the lonely castle which they came upon suddenly in a bend of the road. Gortuleg was its name, and Glenfinnan was to remember long the scene enacted there as they passed.

There was no safety for the Prince at Gortuleg,

no safety for anyone who knew him or had been allied with his cause. For suddenly, like magic, a confused crowd of armed men and disheveled women had sprung, like goblins, apparently out of the very ground itself. The whole cavalcade gave rein to their horses and pounded on through the night to Invergarry. It was some time before they slackened their speed enough for speech. Then Max said, "It's a bad omen, for wild as they are they are of the mountains, Lord Lovat's people. It was their fear and ignorance that turned them against us. But it is bad—it is bad!"

His words brought a strange depression to Glenfinnan. It stayed with him all the morning at Invergarry where they caught salmon for breakfast, and rested in the clear blue air at the river's mouth. It was with him all day as they went on and on, fearing spies on all sides and knowing that the price on Prince Charlie's head was so heavy a one that all of Europe might try to win it.

"Prince Charlie, the young Chevalier! Charlie came to our town, the young Chevalier!" Glenfinnan's mind kept singing the words, but his heart was with his cousin. He saw her as she had been the

night of the Christmas banquet at Thistle Inn. That memory was his one comfort in the rough, difficult week after the fearful battle. They were making at first, indirectly, and then as straight as they could go, for Thistle Inn, and to both Max and Glenfinnan the thought brought strength and renewed patience.

"They are loyal there, laddie. Soon there will be an end to all treachery. Ian Campbell, traitor that he is, has known little of the glens for many a year. Prince Charlie will be safe enough once he is fair within our borders." Max spoke confidently and it seemed as though his words had given fresh courage to the jaded horses. The whole cavalcade was spent with fatigue. The Prince was closely guarded by the Lowland noblemen who had accompanied him. Glenfinnan had had glimpses of his tall figure and shining hair now and then, but he had no chance of speech with him.

There had been two thoughts constantly with him during the journey: the thought of the Prince who was flying for his life, in utter misery over the failure of his cause; and the thought of Ellie, his beloved young cousin, a prisoner somewhere in Edinburgh.

Once the Prince was safe at Thistle Inn he, Glenfinnan, would crave permission to ride straight across the moorlands to find her.

It was dark when they reached the outskirts of Thistle Inn, and as they rode slowly and yet more slowly, the deepening dusk seemed to hold within its misty depths something sinister. The first cavalcade halted suddenly, their outriders gathering in a circle, uncertainly. After a few minutes one of them came galloping back and drawing rein by Max and Glenfinnan spoke quickly. "His Royal Highness directs that you both come forward," he said.

Max and Glenfinnan gave full rein to their horses, who galloped across the springy bracken as though glad to be once more on familiar ground. The two drew rein on the outside of a small circle of mounted soldiers which formed the Prince's bodyguard. At his word they drew aside and he rode through, coming up to Max and Glenfinnan, who dismounted and bowed. Then standing at attention they waited.

The Prince smiled, and there was something valiant and wistful in the smile. "Those of the glen country in our first ranks here believe there is trouble ahead. You, Master Glenfinnan, and you, too, good

man," the Prince turned to Max, "you know well all these parts. What do you say—is there something strange in the silence and the absence of life on these moors?"

Max's brown face had whitened. He did not speak for a moment, but was gazing off across the bracken, across the breathless beauty of the purple moorland that seemed to hold some menace.

"I know too well there must be something strangely amiss, Sire, for I swear you my oath it is the first time of any homecoming I have had (and I was born here at Thistle Inn and have come back to it many times) that there has not been many a familiar face about, willing hands and voices of welcome. Why, we are within a fair mile or so of the very rocks of Thistle Inn, and there is not so much as a dog's bark to bid us welcome." Max spoke slowly out of his perplexity and his concern.

Glenfinnan broke in. "If it please your Royal Highness, I can go forward, or Max and I together. We know every rise of the ground, and we can find out for you at once what it may be that causes this strange silence." Glenfinnan's cheeks were crimson, his eyes like stars. Suddenly—he could not have told

why—it seemed as though all the wonder and glory of the Prince and his cause had become again a radiant thing. To serve him—to watch and guard him—to penetrate the secret lairs and plans of the enemy—this indeed was life for Glenfinnan!

Prince Charlie laughed out in the soft April air. "A good lad, aye, a good, upstanding lad, and what care I for lost battles and kingdoms when so brave a friend stands ready beside me? Look you, lad." He motioned to Glenfinnan to come up to the side of his horse, and after he had done so, leaned forward and placed a hand upon his shoulder. There was something very like a blessing in the action and it came strangely in that moment of fear and uncertainty, of odd menace and bewilderment. "Listen well, young Glenfinnan. You are but a child, yet have you given your all, well nigh your life, and that yet, it may be. I would say to you that I do now at this moment in this time of peril knight you Sir Glenfinnan of Loch Shiel."

Glenfinnan sank to his knees and bowed his head upon them, then stood up and saluted. He stepped back a few paces toward Roderick, his face very white. Tears were running down Max's rugged

cheeks. The Prince's tone changed. He turned his horse. "I ride forward with these two. The rest may follow. We make straight for Thistle Inn," he called.

They rode slowly. The very horses themselves, sensing danger, picked their way delicately past golden stretches of gorse bushes, their heads high now and then, their nostrils dilated.

Suddenly Max turned toward the Prince, putting out his arm. "There is a lad crawling toward us some dozen yards ahead. He is flat, but has just raised his arm. That is our sign of friendship. It would be well to halt, Sire," he said.

Quietly the word was passed. Silently they waited. It was some little time before the crawling figure, so much a part of the ground and gorse as to seem one with it, wriggled its way to them. Then it rose, and Max and Glenfinnan called softly, "Starf!" It was Starf indeed, wild-eyed, shaggy-haired, his clothes torn by furze and briers, his bare knees bleeding from their contact with the rough, stony ground. He fell on his knees before the Prince, bowing his dark head. Then rising, he said in a voice that held back a sob, "I am Sir Hugh Roderick's nephew. It is

a sad and bitter thing to have for your Royal Highness' welcome only dark danger." Again a sob caught Starf's voice. "You and your army would be more welcome than life itself, were it not that danger lies everywhere, Sire, everywhere. You cannot turn back. There is one chance in going forward beyond us. Ride swiftly now, straight as the crow flies. Five trusted men of ours are waiting at the rocks to hold and care for your horses, and, please God, you will all safely reach the shelter of Thistle Inn."

"Well spoken, lad. Come up here beside Max and we'll ride forward," said the Prince. Starf jumped lightly up beside Max, and swiftly they all rode forward.

Five minutes later the rocks gleamed through the mist. The soft bracken underneath and the moaning of the wind all about them silenced the sound of the horses' hoofs. Eager men grabbed their bridles. They dismounted, and a moment later the great oak door of Thistle Inn closed after them. Within, there was the mist drifting in through chinks in the rock walls, the peat smoke, the chill air, all that was familiar; and yet to Glenfinnan, who had known it for a short time, and to Max, who had known it

always, there was now a new something in Thistle Inn that spoke, as the moors had done, of fear.

There was less noise and confusion than usual, but at once as they entered and stood in the bare stone entrance room, they felt many presences near; and as Glenfinnan looked toward the back he saw that all the rooms and corridors, as far as the dungeon passage which led to the huts and rocks beyond, were thronged with Highland folk. Here were young men and old; women, whose wild faces held something of adoration, pressed forward, holding their shawls close to their faces, their dark eyes gleaming through the dusk. As the Prince crossed the entrance hall with Starf, there was a swaying through the crowd; some of the people knelt, and others bowed low. Dogs barked, their tails wagging uncertainly. It was a very great moment for Thistle Inn.

Fear held the rooms and whispered at the windows. It seemed everywhere. It dominated. Starf told them all that he knew, and they realized as he talked that he had risked much for them all and would risk more. Messages had begun to drift in, notes with the English King's seal. Warnings sped across the moors. Stealthy steps were heard at night.

Starf had been out every day. He had hidden in crags near the lochs; had stayed two nights near Loch Honru; had seen the approach of warships toward dawn. He had been chased for ten miles across the moors by armed men, whose shots had only just missed him.

They sat at the long tables at supper while Starf told them all he knew. Max, with the help of some of Sir Hugh's men, had gradually coaxed the peasants back to their huts and there was quiet again in the gloom of the cavern-like place. Sir Roderick had slipped from sleep to unconsciousness a few days before, and deep in his heart Starf hoped that his grandfather might pass away without hearing the heartbreaking news—that the battle of Culloden had been lost, that Cumberland's men were on the war-path everywhere, that Thistle Inn itself was threatened.

Glenfinnan sat with both hands clenched upon his knees. He sat at table with the Prince, and the wonder of it thrilled him, but he was sick at heart. The Prince had been right in some ways when he had said that Glenfinnan was hardly more than a child. It was true that in spite of his grave speech and ways he

was still very much a boy; and it was the boyish side of him that had dreamed of the Prince, had thrilled at the dream and then at the actuality of Prince Charlie's great adventure, his daring, his assurance, the bright picture of his future. . . . The radiance had vanished. There seemed no hope anywhere.

Prince Charlie sat at the head of the board, in the very chair that Elspeth had occupied on Christmas Eve. The flare of a tall rushlight behind him cast a shining flicker on his bronzed face and gleaming hair. He spoke gayly enough, ate heartily of the beef and cheese before him, and drank several tankards of ale. It was only when he was not speaking, and when his attention wandered, that a morose expression appeared on his face. Glenfinnan, near him, saw always the look of suffering in his eyes. He himself ate little or nothing, for food seemed to choke him. Despair was close to him. There was no one in the great banquet hall, not even the Prince himself, who suffered as Glenfinnan suffered during that meal.

An hour later the boy came back into the deserted banquet hall. He was trying in his young way to puzzle out what was best and right for him. He had had a bad half hour with Starf before supper. Both

boys had gone through bitter times, but there had been only friendship between them. The bitterness had arisen from the desperate situation in which they found themselves, for both were helpless to go to the aid of the two girls, their friends and kin, who were in danger. Starf could not leave Thistle Inn in its peril, or his dying grandfather whom he must guard with his life. He had had little or no sleep day or night since early in the week. He had watched the lochs and moors, had twice escaped death, had somehow kept order and harmony in the peasant-filled huts on his domain. His fear for Cherry and Elspeth he kept from speech—that was his Scotch way—but something of Glenfinnan's agony was in his heart. Of only one thing were both of them certain, and that was that they must, at all odds and whatever might betide, stand steadfast at the side of Prince Charlie.

Elspeth had sat in that high-backed chair on Christmas Eve. How proud she would be to know that Charles Edward Louis Philip Casimir Stuart had occupied it later! How sweet and excited and jubilant she would be! Glenfinnan sat down in the chair and, leaning forward, his arms on the rude oak

table and his face buried in them, he sobbed with great gasps that seemed to tear at his very heart. Only his weeping broke the silence, until a sword clanked and the footsteps of Charles Stuart sounded as he crossed the room.

"Ho, lad, why—Master Glenfinnan—what is this, and what do you here? Why, lad!" The Prince's voice had again that tenderness that Glenfinnan had noticed on the night of their own Highland victory, out on the battlefield. How endlessly long ago it seemed now! He, a soldier, to be caught crying like a whipped child by his lord and master. His shame made him keep his face hidden but his sobs ceased.

A few minutes later he was telling the Prince the story; telling him of Elspeth, the little cousin, of her firelight fancies, of her dreams high in the hawthorn tree. And somehow Prince Charlie's friendly and even cheerful interest took away some of his grief. He heard, now, of how the Prince and Elspeth had met on the moors at Moll Hall, of their talk. "Why, verily, she is the bravest lass in all the world, the little Mistress Elspeth. You say she is in peril. I say again she is the bravest lass in all the world, and

that ere dawn you will be riding straight to the city to lend her your aid!"

The Prince had risen. Glenfinnan got to his feet, protesting. "I could not go, Sire, not for the world. I could not leave you."

Prince Charlie's voice answered sternly, "You will do as I command you. You will obey. It is my order to you that you go. You——"

A sudden sound nearby startled them. Starf's white desperate face appeared in the darkness.

"There is no chance for a horse," he panted. "You must fly southeast. A messenger says marine platoons are gathering over the moors. They are almost upon us. I must guard things here. You, Glenfinnan, guard the Prince. You have just time—through the tunnel. There is not one second to lose."

Prince Charlie turned smilingly toward Glenfinnan. "After all, I shall want you by my side, lad," he cried, and as they made their flight across the moors a gladness and a jubilance rose in Glenfinnan's heart.

CHAPTER XXIII

"Ho! Ho!" Silence, only the sleepy twitter of wild birdlings and the swish of gorse bushes in the wind. "Ho!" Cherry put her hand to silence Elspeth, who would have spoken. Then in her fatigue, leaning a little forward, her arm around Fireloch's neck, she uttered the cry of a night-owl calling to its mate. They had traveled on their faithful steeds for three nights and parts of three days, sleeping in rock caves large enough to hold all four of them safe from sight; eating the dried meat from their wallets; drinking at streams. They both felt that they could not go any farther, but Cherry would not have admitted it for anything in all the world.

"Lady McAllister's old place near Loch Honru" —these were the magic words that had helped Elspeth to go forward during the three days. Cherry, with the uncanny instinct that seemed always to guide her, was sure that all the moorlands around Thistle Inn were guarded, spied upon, perhaps already under the eyes of some of Cumberland's men.

She had therefore traveled in another direction, sure that she could find the old family seat of Lady McAllister's people and safety for them both. She had been encouraged by Elspeth's report of having gone to the McAllister city home and having been told that her ladyship was away.

"She is staunch and brave, Ellie. There is no one who can do more for the Prince, except a girl called Vionnghal. Once with her we can best take counsel as to what is our next wise step. Courage, Ellie!"

How often during the last day had Cherry urged Elspeth forward! There had been no apparent danger for them, but they were weak with fatigue, and night had closed in upon them as they had approached the high hedge that surrounded Rick Grange. There were lights in some of the windows, and after a few moments a side door opened and someone, hesitating a little, stepped outside.

"Lady McAllister," Elspeth screamed. Somehow she slipped off her horse's back and ran sobbing into her friend's arms.

"Ellie, Ellie, my child! Ellie! But come inside. And who is this—Cherry! Come, come both of you, inside."

Twilight on delicate china, a soft couch, someone kneeling beside her rubbing her hands and feet. Hot wine and water, soothing words, quiet. All these things Elspeth felt dimly during the next hour. A long drawing-room with velvet curtains closely drawn, soft carpets, books, bowls of violets and primroses. A maidservant had removed their coarse shoes and stockings and rough clothes, and they had bathed. Soon they wore tea gowns of Lady McAllister's. Cherry's was red, and it seemed to swallow her up, it was so large for her. She lay on a little chair near the fire, her face very drawn and white in the flickering candle-light.

Lady McAllister sat close by Elspeth's couch. She, too, was white and wan, and she showed the effects of sleepless nights and grave anxiety. Sorrow had visited her, making her less the brilliant social leader in Edinburgh, the proud beauty who had carried all before her, than a sorely anxious woman who feared for those she loved and had no thought for anything else. She showed great tenderness to Elspeth and Cherry, and listened to all that they told her with breathless interest and absorption.

A servant brought supper. They ate it, the three

of them in front of the fire—hot soup, hot fowl and fresh cheese pasty, a dainty that Elspeth had not tasted since the old days at home; and as they sat there in the quiet of that charming room, it seemed to her that all the turmoil and confusion, the wilderness, the meager fare, the uncertainty and danger, were over and that she was back again in the old life, nibbling Cudsy's pasties on the sly.

Cherry seemed scarcely to notice the dainty food on the dish, or the beauty of the room. She ate sparingly, her eyes most of the time on Lady McAllister.

"We have told you of our adventures, such as they are, and now I beg of you, Madam, that you tell us what you know, for indeed we are very ignorant of all that has happened on these moors and beyond them." Cherry sat upright as she spoke, and the velvet tea gown sat so incongruously on her figure, and matched her boyish ways so ill, that in spite of themselves Lady McAllister and Elspeth laughed outright.

"That is well, dear Ellie. It warms my heart to hear you laugh, and indeed I'll tell no news to either of you until you have eaten and rested," said their hostess, knowing well what woeful news there was

to tell since the battle of Culloden. She smiled across at Cherry. "Rest you well, and forget for half an hour that you have played the boy so long. As for you, Ellie, I have news of your friends."

Elspeth squeezed her friend's hands. "Charmaine, Hood, the aunts?" she breathed.

"Yes, I had word from all of them before I left the city. They had had official news of your being a scout and under the Prince's orders, and, Ellie, they are proud, so very proud of you! Your Aunt Joan said to me, 'She is the bravest of us all. She is like my mother. There was something wistful about her. I knew it, yet I never tried to understand her. She was wild, and I hated wild Highland ways. I never was proud of being of Loch Shiel. I tried to curb her restless, impetuous ways. I wish I had been kinder to her when she was a child. I wish that I had left her free!' "

Elspeth sobbed, her face deep in the silken pillow of the couch.

"Charmaine and Hood have made you their heroine, almost their patron saint. You are their wonder friend, and when you go back to them and pick up the old life—as you will do soon—they will still hold

you as something a little higher, something a little different from themselves, but none the less their dear old Ellie."

Elspeth took comfort from this speech, and the next moment was fast asleep. Lady McAllister watched her for a moment, and then turned to Cherry, whose dark eyes were regarding her steadily. "It is well that she sleeps. She is very dear to me and to many others. This life is not for her. It is one of the few comforts I have that Elspeth will soon be safe at home in her uncle's house and under his care."

Cherry's voice whispered her rejoinder. "You have dire word for me that has nought to do with Elspeth Craigie, brave lass that she is, Madam. I most earnestly beg your ladyship to withhold it no longer."

Lady McAllister's eyes met Cherry's with pity. She was grieved that she must hurt this young and dauntless creature, so young, so poised and fine and courageous. She admired the young granddaughter of Sir Hugh Roderick, though she did not feel any particular affection for her.

"You have the courage to face facts, I know. We lost the battle of Culloden, lost it absolutely, utterly.

It was a disaster greater than I can at this moment express to you, so devastating and unutterable a horror that no words of mine or of anyone else in the future can describe it in writing or in speech. Thousands and thousands of brave Highlanders were butchered in battle and in the days afterwards by Cumberland's men. Prince Charlie escaped with a body of Lowland gentlemen through the Nairn Valley. The young Glenfinnan was with them, and he has gone on with Charles Stuart in his wild flight to the islands. Oh, it is a mad business, all of it—mad and brainless and futile!"

Cherry had risen to her feet, the red gown trailing almost to the floor, her face white. There was pity and admiration in Lady McAllister's eyes, but she did not regret her words. She knew that with Cherry there could be no half measures, no soft covering of granite facts. Sooner or later—perhaps within twenty-four hours—she would have known the truth, but it was hard that she should have to face it all at once.

"Culloden," she breathed. "Cumberland's men—butchered—now all the army—all gone?"

Lady McAllister nodded. "The army is no army,

now. It is only a something lost and harassed. Most of it was cut to pieces at Culloden—all of it but some few hundreds who escaped, some of them, God help them, to nearby villages, the most fortunate to the hills. Your courage is always with you; may it one day be rewarded by happier news than I can give you tonight. Come, now, you must go to your bedchamber and try to rest. Ellie shall lie here. Poor child—it has all been such a fairy tale to her!"

Cherry stood looking sadly down at Elspeth's tossed hair and scarlet cheeks. "Yes, you are right. It has been a fairy tale for her," she answered gently.

CHAPTER XXIV

FERGUS leaned wearily against the oaken panel of the side door of the Grange. Then he pounded with the knocker. A maidservant unbolted the door, first calling, "Ho, who comes?" Fergus answered with his name, and as the door was pulled back entered quickly. "A word with her ladyship, my girl," he said. Less than five minutes later he was in Lady McAllister's presence. It was mid-morning and the sun shone in through the windows.

"The Prince, three of his men, and young Glen-

finnan are hidden somewhere in a cave near Loch Eist. They must be warned at once that the escape from the south is cut off by Cumberland's scouts. Their only chance is to put off to Scapa. I am making straight for the east corner. I think they are there, but the servants in your outer domain tell me that my kinswoman Cherry is here, and I wish her to ride posthaste toward the west." Fergus stood with his bonnet held at his side, his plaid mud-covered, torn by briers and covered with furze burs, his face unshaven, a world of despair in his eyes.

Lady McAllister stared at him. "The danger," she breathed, "the awful danger!"

"What danger, if you please, Madam? And you Cousin, what message do you bring?" Cherry's voice sounded behind them. She and Elspeth came up to the two. They were dressed in their rough boys' garments, refreshed and rested by their night at the Grange. Fergus told them briefly.

Elspeth took Lady McAllister's hand, her eyes on Fergus. "Glen is in danger," she said, and they wondered that she had uttered her cousin's name before that of the Prince. "Glen and the Prince," she went on; then, turning to Cherry, she said, "I go with

Cherry. I, too, will help to find them and to warn them."

"No, Ellie, you shall have safe conduct across the glens this very day. Your work is finished, and your place is in the safety of your uncle's house." Lady McAllister looked grave. To Fergus she said, "I beg you, sir, to confirm my counsel in this. I want Elspeth Craigie to go home."

Elspeth spoke quickly. "I've come so far with Cherry—I cannot leave her to go on alone," she said.

Then Cherry turned, putting her hand on Lady McAllister's arm. "She is right, Madam, and yet I can hardly tell you why. I see beyond most things." Cherry's words came slowly, and the far-off look crept into her bright eyes. "I see that there is need for Ellie to come with me." There was something definite and final in her decision and none of the others questioned it.

Lady McAllister watched them as they galloped off across the moor. Her eyes followed Elspeth until she seemed but a black spot against the horizon.

Fergus left them at the first turn. They rode on for hours, the soft wind in their faces. It was dark

when they reached the dim outline of a woodland stretch. Cherry knew that the loch was just beyond the wood. They dismounted, tethered their horses, and crept around the side through a copse beyond which lay a row of mud-roofed houses.

"There is a narrow bit of bay here," said Cherry, "too shallow for the warships. That is why they will row off from the inlet and away from the open sea. They may be everywhere!" Cherry raised her head, listened, caught Elspeth's arm. "There is Nairn the boatman with his boat. Ellie, there is our Prince and your young cousin, Glen."

Elspeth could not speak. She saw the swaying of kilts, the gleam of knees. She saw her comrade Glen, and a look of joy was on his face. She saw the Prince turn and speak with him as Nairn slipped the boat from its moorings. They watched it until it disappeared around a huge bowlder. A shot rang out. "Too late," breathed Elspeth. "They are safe."

Cherry stood listening tensely, holding Elspeth's arm, her eyes on the figure of Glenfinnan, who had turned away from the loch. As he caught sight of the two girls his face beamed in a triumphant smile. Another shot rang out. It caught him, and he fell.

The next moment Elspeth felt Cherry's hand pressing down on her arm. She was dazed. It all seemed like a black dream. "Lie flat and crawl toward him, Ellie. We must drag him to shelter!"

It seemed to Elspeth as they crawled toward Glenfinnan that she was beyond fear, that nothing mattered at the moment, not the Prince nor his cause nor the shots from an unseen enemy. There was only one thing that mattered and that was to reach Glenfinnan and drag him to the shelter of a rock. They did reach him finally, in spite of the rough, rocky ground that cut their legs. They reached him and knelt beside him; Cherry bent over him. He looked up at her smiling. "It's only my leg," he said, and Elspeth found herself sobbing softly in relief.

"We must not delay a moment, Ellie. Put your hands under his arms, so. Now I'll take this side. The enemy has gone. I am almost sure of that. They knew that our men are gathering around, and—the Prince once gone—they will fly for their lives." All the time Cherry was speaking she and Elspeth were slowly dragging Glenfinnan toward the rock. It was really only the work of a moment although it seemed an eternity. Glenfinnan had dropped back on

Cherry's arm, but after a moment, once they were sheltered by the great rock and Cherry had given him a drink from the flask in her wallet, he sat up. "It's just my leg," he said again. "The Prince is safe for the moment, off of the islands, but you two girls are in danger here. What a stupid pate I was not to run for shelter as the boat slid off!"

He started to rise, and Cherry pressed him down with a firm hand. "I agree with you that the danger is past," she told him, "and that help will come. Our men have had warning and are everywhere. We shall have safe escort back to the Grange, and Ellie and Lady McAllister will spend the days making you well, Master Glen. You are a brave lad." There was tender pride in Cherry's eyes and voice as she spoke.

They heard footsteps, and Fergus came running to them across the bracken. He came swiftly, his kilts swinging in the wind. Then without a word he knelt beside Glenfinnan, laying his bonnet on the ground. "They caught me in the leg, but save for that I'm as sound as ever," Glenfinnan spoke gayly, in spite of his pain.

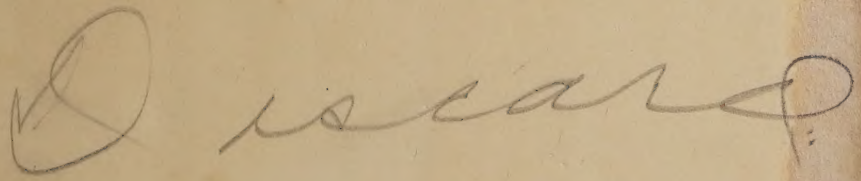
"Aye, there is much to be thankful for in this

dark hour. Cumberland's men have fled. There are many willing hands to help." Fergus lifted Glenfinnan as he spoke. Ten minutes later he sat his horse sidewise, holding the boy gently across the saddle, while four stalwart Highlanders rode beside the girls. It was bright golden noon when the towers of the Grange came in sight. Cherry rode up to Fergus, who halted, as did the others.

"Goodbye, Glenfinnan and Ellie and all of you. You will soon be safe in Edinburgh, but do not forget that there may yet be work for our Prince and his cause. A golden eagle flew above the loch when the Prince landed at Loch Shiel. Who knows but that it was an omen, that some of the glory it foretold may one day still come to Charlie?" And Cherry turned her horse and started off.

Elspeth called after her, with a sob in her voice, "Cherry, Cherry, where are you going?"

Cherry paused, smiling back over her shoulder. "Back to my home!" she called. And they watched her as she galloped over the moors to Thistle Inn.



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